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# PPC TRENDS 2024



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# PPC TRENDS 2024

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**Amadeus Norén**  
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Amity



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solutions have made them a exceptional partner. ”



**Thomas Bak Nørresø**  
*Head of Performance Marketing*  
BodyLab



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**INTRODUCTION**  
**YOUR HUMANITY  
MAKES THE  
DIFFERENCE**

**BEN STEELE**  
**SENIOR EDITOR**



In last year's PPC Trends ebook, many contributors wrote about AI and automation. They also touched on how important it is to remember that humans are on the other side of your campaigns – and to ensure you're optimizing for them, not just for platform metrics.

This year, again, most of our contributors had something to say about AI. But when it comes to humans, they spend more time talking about you. Not the generalized “you” – you, specifically, the person reading this ebook. Hi! In the rush to keep up with developments in AI, remember that **you are the difference maker**.

Your creative ideas, intuition, and understanding of your audience, your wacky ideas and out-there tests, and the things you create drive the most profound insights and impactful results.

**Your humanity is the key ingredient in paid advertising business outcomes.**

Don't forget it.

AI is a practical requirement for PPC success. Not only can you not avoid it, but embracing it could be key to success. AI currently can't, however, recognize trends emerging in other regions and jump on them when they're new. They can't recognize the humanity in audience members to find a point of connection. They can't craft exceptional, cohesive cross-platform messaging to nurture consumers through ever-more-complex purchasing journeys.

And I guarantee you that an AI could never match the insights from this book's contributors.

But those tools, tested and applied responsibly to workflows that make sense, can be powerful performance drivers.

In a recent newsletter, [Brian Morrisey](#) wrote:



**RATHER THAN IMPROVE THE PRODUCT,  
MOST PUBLISHERS SEE AI AS A WAY TO  
CUT COSTS.**

I think this might be the key differentiator in how marketers use AI. Every business wants to cut costs, but cutting costs for its own sake isn't always a good idea. High-quality outcomes often require expense. It's time to be honest about where AI improves value – and where using it means taking the easy path for its own sake.

Cost-per-click (CPC) inflation is also on experts' minds; it's the second overall trend this book covers. It has many potential causes, complicating PPC efforts across most verticals.

I don't say this to diminish your struggles, but: Remember, you're in the same boat as everyone else. Costs are increasing everywhere: at the grocery store, in business supply chains, and in your ad auctions. Everyone has to live a little leaner. This is something you share with your customers.

According to the experts, the answer is value. Focus on the value you get from every ad. Validate your performance data yourself. Look for innovative ways to engage with your audience and bring a shopping experience to them.

Double down on the value that **you offer**, too. (Hi again.) Sharing a struggle with your audience is an opportunity to exercise empathy, and continue refining how you understand and speak to them.

The third broad trend this book addresses is leaning into change. The last year has seen new developments in technology and law, changes in reporting, as well as new channels and ways of engaging with audiences.

The contributors spoke about a few specific situations that revolve around the theme of embracing change. Whether it's leaning into GA4, seeking audiences on new channels, or pivoting to privacy-focused advertising, the experts recommend not just rolling with the punches, but leaning into them – and the disruption that comes with them.

Marketers might feel like they're losing a lot: control of ad platforms, access to consumer data, and long-established methods of tracking and reporting. Where can you gain? Instead of focusing on what you're losing and trying to find ways to work around the changes, use that energy to leverage the change that comes with those losses.



**IT'S A GREAT TIME TO PIVOT. EVERYONE HAS TO, BUT IF YOU CAN DO IT FASTER AND BETTER, THERE'S A LOT OF OPPORTUNITY."**

## Editor's Note On Generative AI

In her 2023 Pubcon presentation and a recent [Letter From the Editor](#), SEJ's editor-in-chief, Amanda Zantal-Wiener, laid out how important it is to understand what generative AI is and is not – and what it can and can't do.

Generative AI can't create truly "original" content and can't create content you ethically can take credit for.

At the current point of its evolution, we're comfortable saying that generative AI is not a replacement for creative professionals, and businesses implementing it as such may discover the move was shortsighted – not just from a [PR point of view](#), but also, a [legal one](#).

However, in the case of PPC, this stance requires more nuance. Tools using generative AI to create content are being built into advertising platforms. There are, in fact, many effective and ethical uses for AI in PPC.

Some of this year's contributors talk about the power of generative AI to save time and labor when creating ad assets. In PPC, this makes a lot of sense.

In most cases, the AI in today's advertising platforms uses your own existing assets to [generate ads and variations](#) as a form of highly efficient A/B testing. It's much less likely that this use case constitutes removing a human job, and it can elevate productivity by converting time spent on split testing into time spent on the next campaign. Additionally, when using existing assets that you own, it might reduce the risk of copyright infringement issues.

Image and even video generation tools are integrating into ad platforms, too. But currently, most visual creative generation – such as core branded materials and product photos – is executed outside advertising platforms. Using generative AI to create these core materials reintroduces risk to your company and brand because:

- ★ You may not be able to claim full ownership of the assets you're uploading into your campaigns.
- ★ Not all third-party platforms permit using outputs commercially in all cases.
- ★ This also potentially pulls money away from creative professionals, especially freelancers.

The law on whether you actually own those assets – and whether legal action can reasonably be taken against you for infringement – is [as yet unsettled](#).

To quote from a [2023 legal sidebar](#) from the U.S. Congressional Research Service:



**A FINAL QUESTION IS WHO IS (OR SHOULD BE) LIABLE IF GENERATIVE AI OUTPUTS DO INFRINGE COPYRIGHTS IN EXISTING WORKS. UNDER CURRENT DOCTRINES, BOTH THE AI USER AND THE AI COMPANY COULD POTENTIALLY BE LIABLE.**

Some platforms have taken steps to protect users from these liability issues. [Google said it would defend some individuals from liability](#). Microsoft has made a similar [statement to users of its AI tools](#). Getty Images also released a [“commercially safe” AI image generator](#).

It’s important to note that you should always investigate the actual terms of indemnity. Google, for example, does not appear to extend indemnity to users of Google Bard, and it comes with conditions that, for instance, only cover “accidental” infringement.

When considering using generative AI in your PPC process, ask these questions:

- ★ Do I have the rights and/or licenses to use all of the data the model is using to generate outputs?
- ★ Does the platform or tool permit the use of its output commercially?
- ★ Does the platform or tool provide me with liability protection?
- ★ If the platform does offer liability protection, what are the terms and conditions?

Google published its [AI responsibility principles](#), and it’s a good idea to familiarize yourself with them as you discuss generative AI in your workflow with colleagues.

As you’ll see from this book’s contributors and sponsors, effectively integrating AI into your PPC processes will be a necessity in 2024.

# **CRAFTING THE ULTIMATE GOOGLE ADS BLUEPRINT FOR AI-POWERED EXCELLENCE**

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The landscape of paid advertising has shifted dramatically, propelled by the capabilities of AI-driven solutions. Advertisers are embracing AI-powered tools and platforms that analyze vast datasets in real-time, extracting insights and optimizing campaigns for maximum impact.

The linchpin of this transformation? A thoughtfully structured Google Ads account that seamlessly integrates with machine learning to boost campaign performance.

## **Campaign Precision: Laying The Foundation for AI Success**

Creating an optimal Google Ads account structure begins with precise campaign segmentation. This departure from one-size-fits-all campaigns allows for a more tailored approach. Each campaign should be crafted around a specific product, service, or target audience, providing AI algorithms with the ability to detect nuanced trends and behaviors.

The significance of campaign segmentation goes beyond customization—it's the fuel that powers AI-driven insights. By grouping keywords, ads, and audiences within each campaign, advertisers equip AI with the building blocks to generate highly targeted ads that resonate with their intended audience.

## **Ad Group Mastery: Orchestrating AI Insights**

Understanding the differences in semantics across your chosen keyword sets will play a crucial role in how ad groups are segmented. Single keyword ad groups have been central to successful paid search campaigns for many years, however, with the advancement of machine learning and AI's semantic understanding of the subtle differences between keywords, a single topic ad group (or Hagakure) structure would be better suited.

Well-structured ad groups contribute to an improved Quality Score, leading to favorable ad placements and reduced costs per click. The sophistication of AI in analyzing and optimizing based on these nuances sets it apart from traditional methods.

## Creative Innovation

Variety sparks innovation, and in the AI era, experimentation knows no bounds. AI serves as a creative partner, utilizing a range of data to craft compelling headlines, descriptions, and calls to action that resonate with the audience.

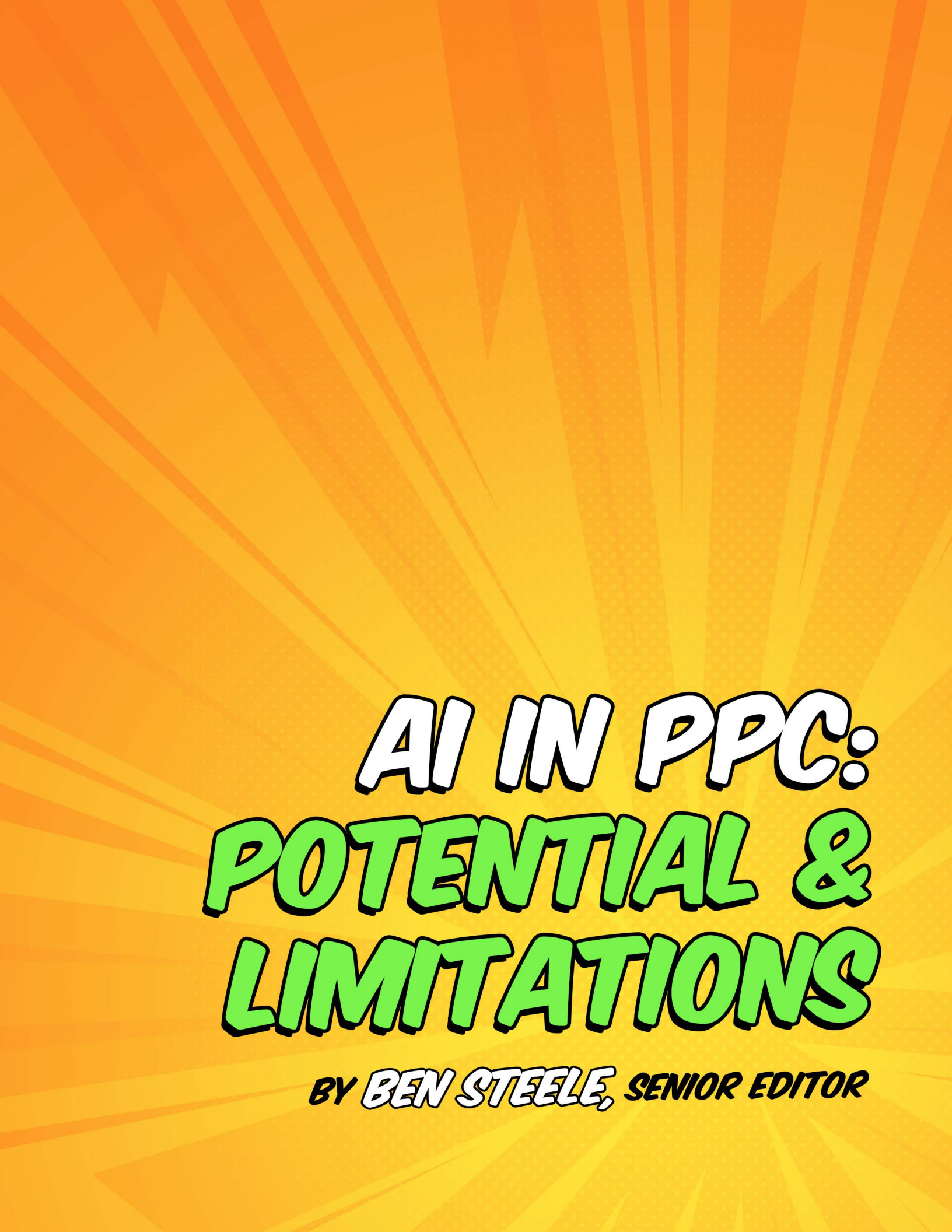
For this approach to work long-term, the advertiser needs to keep a balance between machine learning to test for winning combinations and managed growth. A human-led strategy will be important in understanding the possible testing volume without dampening results.

Dynamic ad generation furthers this creativity, where ads evolve based on real-time user preferences. Here, AI is promoted from being a creative partner for the advertiser to the creative director that crafts copy to strike a chord with each user. This level of personalization is the hallmark of AI's ability to enhance campaign innovation.

## Conversion Mastery: Navigating AI With Data Precision

In the AI realm, data is the compass that guides decision-making. Thorough conversion tracking across various actions powers AI algorithms to make informed decisions. This data-driven approach enables the advertiser to allocate budgets, target audiences, and refine bidding strategies with new-found precision.

Conversion tracking offers a comprehensive view of the customer journey, allowing AI to optimize not just for hard conversions but also for sustained engagement and loyalty. With comprehensive secondary conversion data, machine learning becomes a strategic powerhouse.



# **AI IN PPC: POTENTIAL & LIMITATIONS**

***BY BEN STEELE, SENIOR EDITOR***

Year after year, I'm never certain what the content of our Trends books will look like before I see our contributors' quotes. I ask each of them an open-ended question and then build out the content based on the responses.

I didn't, however, have any doubt that this edition would have a section about AI.

This year, [new AI features](#) rolled out on PPC platforms, and marketers began adopting [generative AI](#) in earnest.

The dust is settling after the initial exuberance about AI, and we're starting to see more nuanced and cautionary opinions develop. In this section, you'll see contributors highlighting the benefits of both AI-powered [automated ad campaigns](#) and [adopting generative AI](#) in your workflow. You'll also see cautionary words, reminding you that human thinking and creativity still drive online interactions.

If I had to summarize this section's insights in three sentences, they would be:

- ★ AI is **very good** at the things it's good at, and **very bad** at the things it's bad at.
- ★ AI is a square peg, so beware of round holes; AI is not a panacea.
- ★ AI can be a multiplier of productivity and results, but some processes are worth the difficulty of doing them yourself.

# Insights In This Section

## [How AI Can Improve Social Media Advertising Performance](#)

– Akvile DeFazio, Founder, AKvertise

## [AI & Personalization In Marketing](#)

– Alex Macura, Founder/CEO, Your Digital Assembly

## [Finding The Balance Of Generative AI In Ads](#)

– Amy Hebdon, Founder + Managing Director, Paid Search Magic

## [Standing Out In A Playing Field Leveled By AI](#)

– Andrea Atzori, Director, Ambire

## [Scale Isn't Everything; Don't Forget The Power Of Humans & Creativity](#)

– Ben Wood, Director of Growth & Innovation, Hallam

## [AI-Powered Campaigns Deliver A Future Where Marketers Can Spend Less Time On Optimization](#)

– Corey Morris, President/CEO, Voltage

## [Automate Campaigns, Not Strategies: What Are You Doing & Why?](#)

– Tim Jensen, Sr. Search Marketing Specialist, M&T Bank

## [Expect Less Campaign Control – Find Exciting New Ways To Spend Your Time](#)

– Lauren Weisel, Director of SEM, Media.Monks

## [Searcher Intent & Audiences Are A Complex Human Formula](#)

– Lisa Raehsler, Founder and SEM Strategy Consultant, Big Click Co.

# HOW AI CAN IMPROVE SOCIAL MEDIA ADVERTISING PERFORMANCE

**AKVILE DEFAZIO**  
FOUNDER, AKVERTISE



Artificial Intelligence (AI) is quickly becoming an integral part of the advertising industry, transforming how companies reach their target audience and how advertisers increase effectiveness and efficiency in managing ad accounts. Here are some ways AI can help drive more results in 2024:

## Targeting Improvements

Just a few short years ago, campaigns and ad sets were set up more granularly, but after iOS updates, Meta launched several new machine learning options that advertisers can leverage for better results and find their customers.

Now, in Meta Ads Manager, there are Advantage+ Audiences that leverage machine learning to help advertisers reach the most valuable audiences much faster. By enabling this, you can also share an audience suggestion, such as recent purchasers, so then the system can prioritize people matching using this high-value audience profile before expanding the targeting net wider.

If you work in ecommerce, Meta's Advantage+ shopping campaigns can help find new customers using its automatic placements, lowest-cost bid strategies, and more by serving the best ads to the people most likely to convert using its AI.

## Creative Optimization

When it comes to creative optimization, particularly on platforms like Meta Ads, running dynamic ads with various creatives can be highly effective. Platforms, like Meta, leverage AI to serve your target audience with the most relevant creative content, increasing the likelihood of achieving your campaign optimization goals.

By trusting the system to determine the best approach, you can expect improved and faster results compared to manual testing by humans. In this past year, its performance has improved significantly, and I believe it will continue to do so.

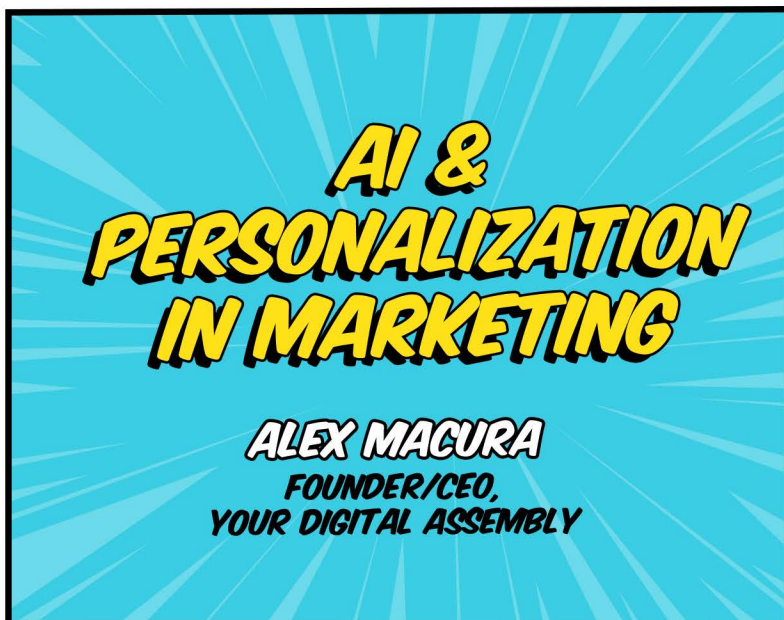
## Measuring Results

AI also offers extensive analytics and reporting capabilities, enabling advertisers to measure the success of their campaigns accurately. With data-driven insights, advertisers can identify the most effective ads and targeting strategies, enabling them to make informed decisions for optimizing campaigns.

We use tools that allow us to import data, conduct trend analysis, create graphs, and obtain valuable insights. By streamlining reporting and analysis, the right AI-powered tool serves as a time-saving asset that can guide optimization efforts and drive favorable outcomes.

This is only the start of the AI revolution transforming the social media advertising landscape. Brands can now connect and interact with their target audience in a more impactful manner and achieve their various goals.

Embracing AI experimentation can be worthwhile, as it elevates our human capabilities, increasing our efficiency, productivity, and effectiveness in our work. If you haven't already, add AI to your advertising stack to elevate your growth goals for 2024.



The world is a fast-paced place, and the marketing industry is even more so. It has to be, just to keep up.

Over the past 50 years, we've seen growth in digital marketing, social media and mobile marketing, television, and database marketing. But what does the future and, more specifically, 2024 hold for the industry as a whole? Let's take a look.

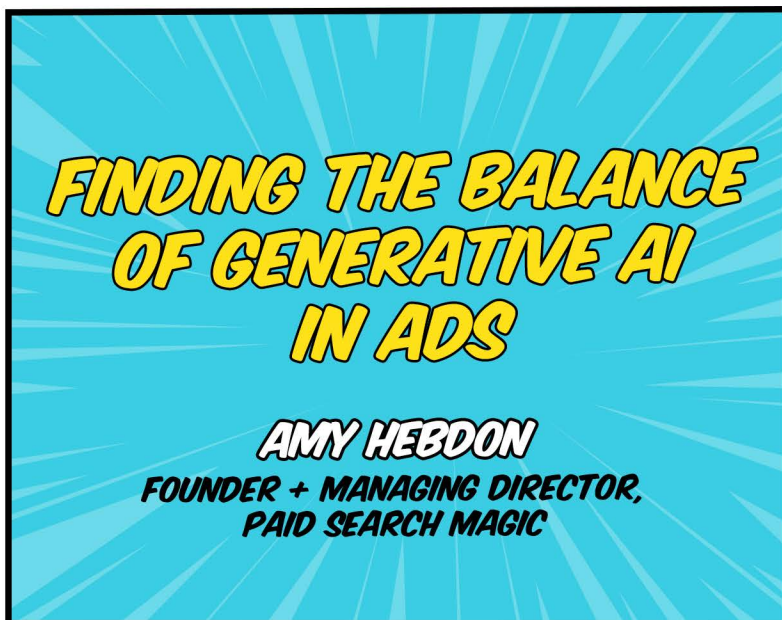
## **A Surge In AI Marketing**

AI gives marketers the ability to analyze huge amounts of data in seconds, boosting efficiency and productivity. Predictive analytics can help to predict consumer and purchase behavior, allowing for more tailored, targeted ad campaigns. And it can learn over time, too, constantly evolving into a more competent version of itself. So, if you've resisted getting on board the AI train, it's time to step up to the platform.

## **More Personalized Content**

Another area AI excels in? Personalization – which is why, in 2024, hyper-personalization is set to become our new reality.

Customers want to feel seen, so any brand that takes the time to curate a buying experience specifically for them will gain traction. Thanks to AI and advanced analytics, content can become more tailored than ever, strengthening brand relationships and boosting return on investment (ROI).



There are many ways to use generative AI to enhance your campaigns – and only two ways to get it wrong:

- 1. Blindly rely on it for everything.**
- 2. Refuse to use it for anything.**

Generative AI is in its infancy and capable of making mistakes, so fully relying on it for 100% accuracy is a bad idea. At the same time, avoiding it because it can't completely replace you needlessly limits your ability to be more creative and productive.

Between those extremes are countless opportunities to improve and streamline your work. Use generative AI for discovery, challenging assumptions, brainstorming, iterating and refining ideas, editing, and strategy.

You don't need costly subscriptions to get started, either. The free version of ChatGPT is a great entry point to meaningfully improve your work and workflow.

# ***STANDING OUT IN A PLAYING FIELD LEVELED BY AI***

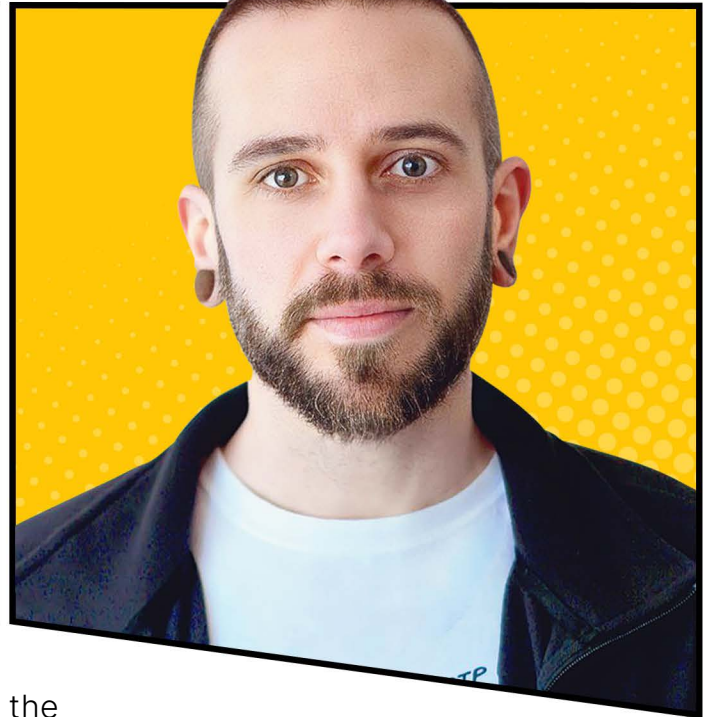
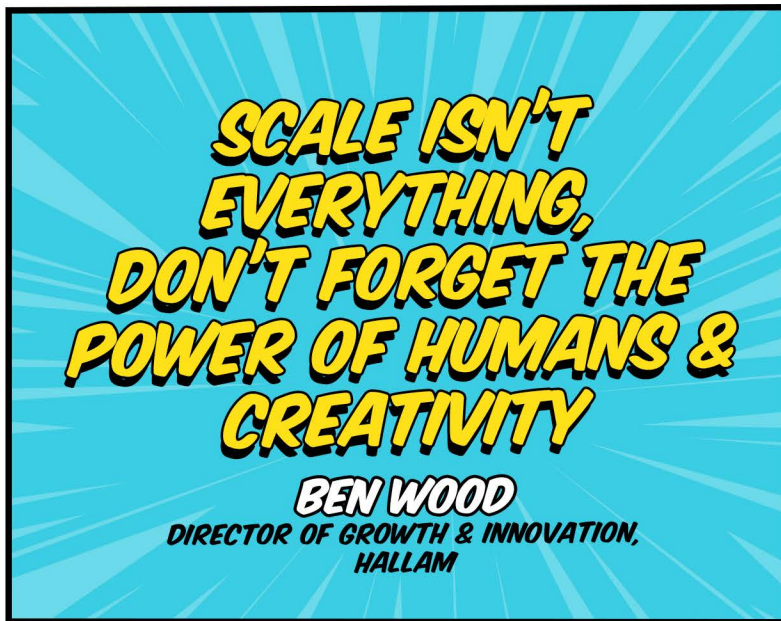
***ANDREA ATZORI***  
***DIRECTOR, AMBIRE***



Automation serves as a formidable ally in streamlining the mundane aspects of our operations, such as campaign build and reporting. By harnessing automation, we not only expedite these processes significantly, but also diminish the likelihood of human errors creeping in.

Nevertheless, it remains undeniable that the very innovations ushered in by AI and machine learning (ML), if not managed, also bear the capacity to homogenize content, often yielding results that hover around the realm of mediocrity or average at best.

Consequently, if we do not settle for average but instead strive for marketing excellence, this pursuit involves leveraging the full spectrum of available data and tools to our advantage. Only by adopting this approach can we mitigate rising costs and consistently deliver outstanding outcomes.



One trend we've been referencing for years is the growing impact of machine learning and automation on advertisers.

In 2023, we've seen a huge acceleration in technological innovation. We've experienced the democratization of creative production via generative AI tools built into Google Ads and other networks, reducing cost and increasing the speed of production. This has lowered the barrier to entry to platforms such as YouTube, and display formats for smaller advertisers with less budget to spend on assets.

We've also seen much-publicized advances in large language models (LLMs), enabling the development of scripts with limited programming capabilities, and offering huge economies of scale for campaign creation and PPC account expansion.

What we'll start to see in 2024 are the second-order effects of generative AI. These are the less obvious ripple effects caused by AI over the longer term.

Despite the increase in our capabilities to create ads at scale using generative AI, this might not enhance performance but could hamper it:

1. AI is already adept at creating ads at scale, such as automatically created ads and demand generation features in Performance Max.

2. It's easier than ever for advertisers to get started and enable more features due to automated creative capabilities. The lower barrier to entry could mean users see even more ads than they're used to.
3. Relying on automated creative may result in generic, feature-based ads.
4. Buyers will learn to tune out these ads.

## Increased Value On Human Perspectives And Creators

As consumers learn to tune out to the potentially homogenous advertising enabled by generative AI, we'll see an increased desire for human perspectives and creativity.

We've already seen Google start to surface creators and influencers via their 'perspectives' feature with the introduction of Search Generative Experience (SGE), and I expect this to bleed through into the advertising landscape.

Partnering with consumer-facing creators and influencers as part of your paid media strategy will increase in importance in the year ahead to maximize your reach across Google's evolving search landscape and beyond.

## Back To Basics: Creative-First Advertising

Today, we have so many channels to manage that it's easy for things to become disconnected. What holds it together? A creative idea. If your campaigns lack a coherent, consistent creative concept, your campaigns will not perform.

Sometimes, we get so caught up in the platform choices we forget about the message we're trying to get out through them.

With the advent of generative AI, I think creativity will be a key differentiating factor for successful campaigns. Starting with a strategy, then a creative concept should always come before media planning. This serves as a golden thread – a compelling creative idea that ties all your marketing and advertising activities together and helps you stand out from the crowd.



AI-generated content is not going away anytime soon and is inevitably making its way into AI-powered ad campaigns in 2024.

AI can craft descriptions, headlines, and ad copy tailored to your client's campaign objectives, resulting in effective, personalized content. This personalization is possible because AI can understand user behavior patterns and apply experimentation and winning results to campaigns in real-time.

You can monitor and manage your client's campaign performance in real-time, ensuring that your campaigns perform relative to your goals.

## Performance Max Campaigns

Performance Max campaigns will utilize machine learning and artificial intelligence technology more thoroughly in 2024.

Performance Max campaigns, following search campaigns, are subjectively one of the most effective ways to reach a broader audience and achieve a higher return on investment.

Google now offers the option to upgrade various campaigns, including dynamic search ads and display campaigns to Performance Max campaigns. Some current benefits of transitioning to Performance Max campaigns include:

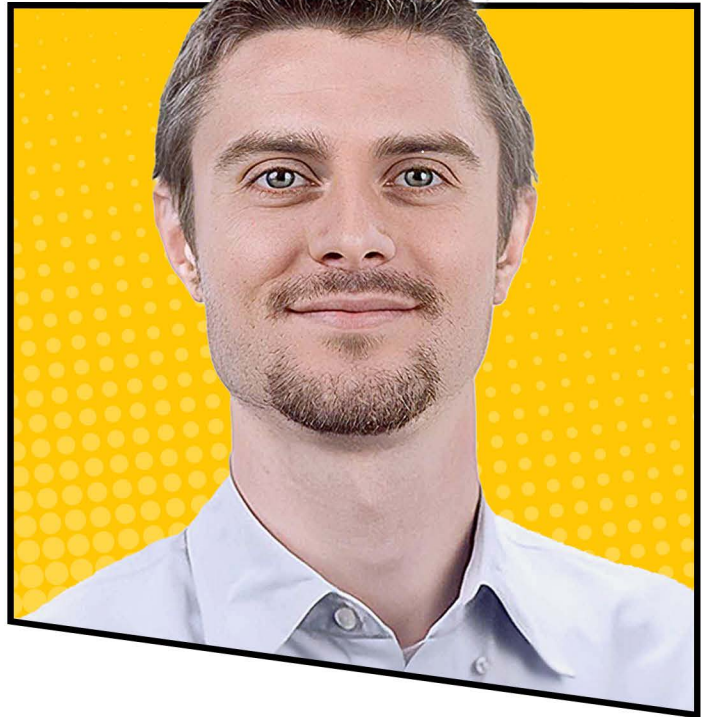
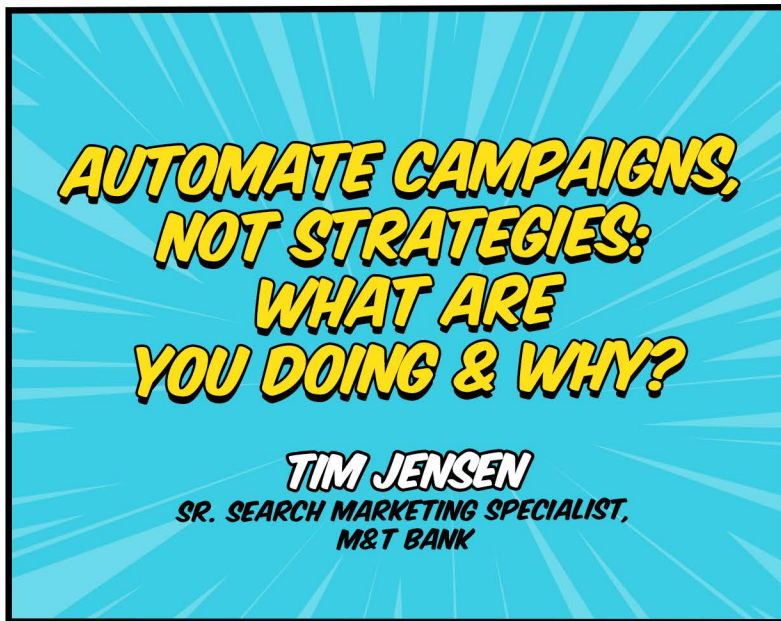
**1. Increasing creative assets.**

The benefit of Performance Max campaigns utilizing your creative assets allows search engines to properly convert your search ad to best fit the intended user base on their search queries. Creative assets will now have more flexibility when changing any text in your ad copy.

**2. Implementing inventory-based ads.**

When your product data feed is connected to a Performance Max campaign, your ads will now function based on the inventory you have left in stock. This can be a huge time-saving benefit because you won't have to manually examine your product inventory amount.

The upgrades to Performance Max campaigns will ultimately lead to a higher usage rate with advertisers.



As PPC managers move forward in a world of increasingly automated, “done for you” campaigns, fully understanding the concerns and goals of your client/boss will help set you ahead. This is not an excuse for not staying up-to-date with current ad platform functionality, but it’s too easy to drift into a “plug-and-play” mentality with the direction in which the PPC world is headed.

Setting up a conversion pixel is relatively easy these days (in many cases), but ask yourself why you are tracking that conversion, and how it ties into the business goals the company ultimately cares about.

Churning out 15 responsive search ad headlines is easier with AI, but will those stand out in the search engine results page (SERP) against creatively brainstormed headlines that speak to the heart of the customer’s needs?

Generating a list of keywords can be as simple as plugging a URL or a couple of seed phrases into Keyword Planner, but are those the most relevant terms that ideal customers are searching for?

On the positive side, increased automation in platforms has reduced the need for constant hands-on tweaking, such as in bid management. This frees up more time you can spend keeping the lines of communication open with the stakeholders you answer to.

Take some time in 2024 to think through how you can better understand stakeholder goals, and how to tie in your targeting, creative, and bidding approach to best meet those objectives.

# **EXPECT LESS CAMPAIGN CONTROL – FIND EXCITING NEW WAYS TO SPEND YOUR TIME**

**LAUREN WEISEL**  
*DIRECTOR OF SEM, MEDIA.MONKS*



One major theme of 2023 has been automation, and I expect this to continue well into 2024. Google continues to roll out campaign types that are heavily automated and give less control to marketers, starting with Performance Max and, most recently, with the launch of Demand Gen.

As Performance Max has evolved over the years, we see many cases where this automated campaign type works incredibly well.

With the recent rollout of Demand Gen campaigns, I suspect Google will continue to move toward either expanding these campaigns' coverage, or rolling out more automated campaign types.

As Google continues to emphasize these automated campaign types, I expect the percentage of account spends on these campaign types to increase, as well. And beyond this, who knows! There could be a world where traditional search campaigns as we know them sunset completely, but that's merely a hypothesis.

Speaking of traditional search campaigns, I'm also seeing a reduction in control with the emphasis on broad match with auto-bidding this year. While many clients were skeptical of this new match type, it's working quite well for many advertisers.

While still available, I'm also seeing less account spend go towards phrase match keywords, and many times without any performance losses for client accounts. From an account structure standpoint, this rollout has, in a way, been a catalyst for campaign consolidation – a far cry from the Single Keyword Ad Groups (SKAG) structure I was taught early on in my career.

This reduction in control that advertisers are experiencing within Google will shift how search marketers work. However, as I reflect on my career as a search marketer, I can point to other industry shifts that seemed huge at the time, but truly freed up time to expand my skill sets.

I remember when auto-bidding strategies first came on the scene. What would I do with all my time freed up from daily bid adjustments? As automation evolved, marketers shifted how we spent our days (and thankfully, there was plenty of other work to be done).

As control becomes limited in the evolution of Google Ads, search marketers will need to become more creative with strategies to ensure that we continue to move search programs forward with the levers we can pull.

While automated, these campaigns shouldn't be approached with a "set it and forget it" mindset. It is a privilege to be able to educate clients and guide them in this ever-changing search landscape. There are so many testing and learning opportunities on the near horizon.

The search landscape has certainly changed a lot, especially over the past year. While all this automation may seem scary, we must embrace automation to stay ahead of the curve. I suspect we'll see the trajectory of automation continue to accelerate during the next year. Not only is this a hot topic in the search space, but in our culture as a whole. I look forward to all of the automation developments 2024 has in store for search marketers.

# SEARCHER INTENT & AUDIENCES ARE A COMPLEX HUMAN FORMULA

**LISA RAEHSLER**  
FOUNDER AND SEM STRATEGY CONSULTANT,  
BIG CLICK CO.



While AI and automation are always hot topics – and the technology advancements amazingly helpful – in 2024, connecting with the customer will be key.

Many advertisers will get away from this by buying into the fast and easy option: allowing machines to do the work for their digital advertising. That's great for tedious task-oriented optimizations – but human strategy, experience, and even intuition will be critical for success in reaching and converting the right customer.

The pros are already in the know. Searcher intent and audiences are a complex human formula advertisers should focus on. Societal culture, economic conditions, and political concerns change rapidly. Messaging targeting people who experience evolving needs and pain points should take center focus.

# AI-DRIVEN PERSONALIZED ADS: MAXIMIZING MARKETING POTENTIAL

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**VANESSA DIAS**  
CONTENT SPECIALIST



# The Future Of AI In Ad Personalization

Artificial intelligence is far from new. But with its boom in 2023 and other current tech trends, the prospects for AI in advertising have become even more promising.

## Automatic Ad Creation

New AI-Ad features can help with generating fresh content based on the existing content on your website.

For example, [Google has introduced](#) an innovative feature that allows marketers to generate more effective combinations of titles and descriptions.

It also automatically generates new text variations based on various factors like the ad's context, keywords, performance, and the landing page content.

## Customer Acquisition Objectives

Consider Google's new customer acquisition objective, which helps marketers do what the name suggests: acquire new customers more efficiently.

This means that your ad campaigns bid higher for new customers than existing ones, expanding your company's sales funnel.

## Audience Targeting

AI features also enable precise audience targeting based on demographics, interests, and behaviors.

This allows platforms to create and test relevant ads quickly, with the goal of improving engagement.

The [Meta Advantage suite](#), for instance, leverages AI to customize ads to specific audiences.

# Making The Most Of AI As A Marketer

While AI Ad platforms hold immense promise, marketers need to be mindful of the following considerations to make the most of this technology:

## Data Privacy

With the increased importance of personalization, marketers must prioritize user data privacy and comply with relevant regulations, such as [General Data Protection Regulation \(GDPR\)](#).

This includes obtaining user consent, being accountable, and ensuring data security.

## Data Quality

The effectiveness of AI depends on data quality. AI tools lack an innate understanding of what's required to accomplish marketing objectives.

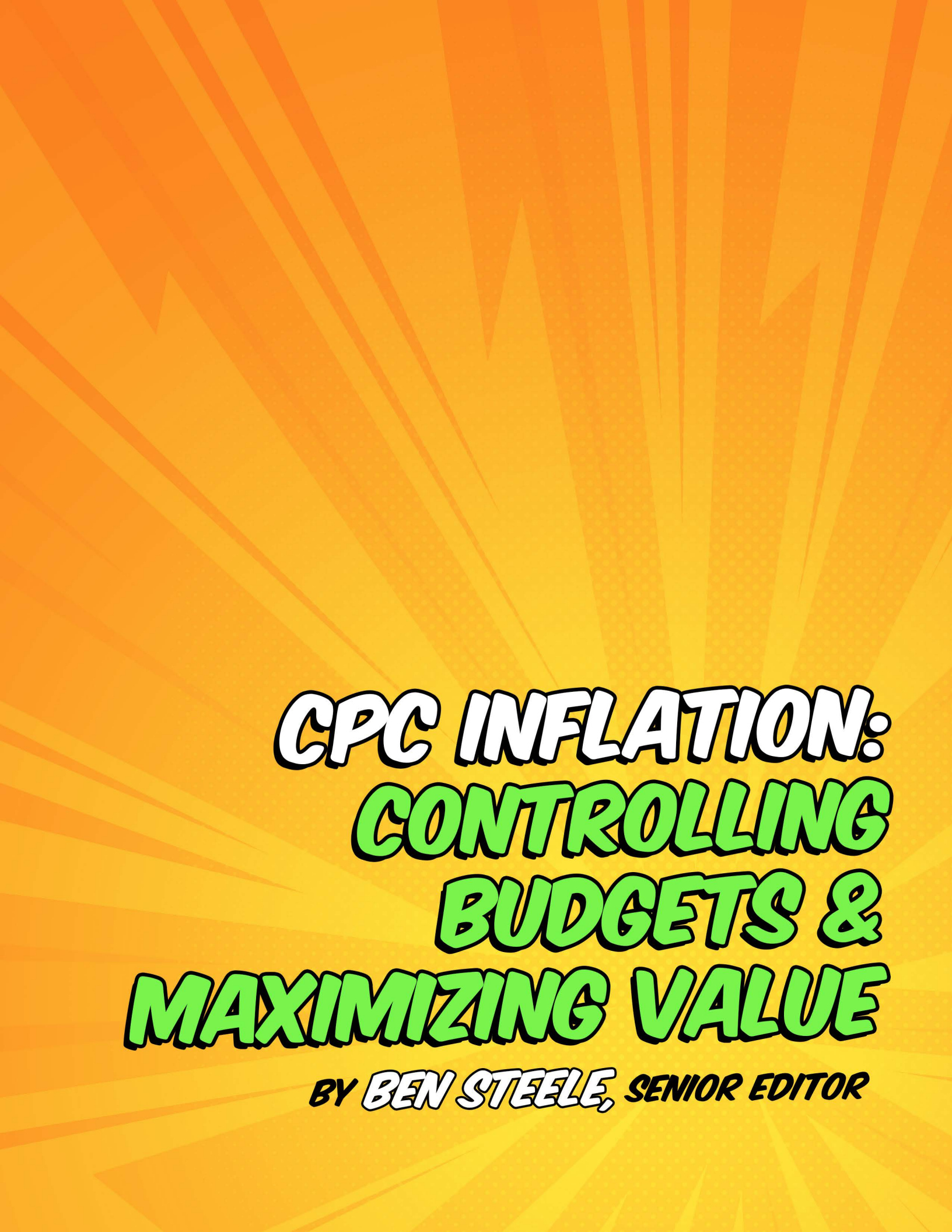
With inaccurate or outdated data, they can make suboptimal decisions, potentially reducing their effectiveness.

To prevent this, marketers must ensure that the data used for personalization is accurate and up-to-date.

## Human Oversight

While AI tools excel at extracting valuable insights from vast data and automating repetitive tasks, they fall short in understanding brand personas, addressing pain points, and interpreting customer desires – all of which are essential in marketing.

By combining [AI with human empathy and creativity](#), marketers can take advantage of a partnership that results in creative assets and ad campaigns that consistently outperform their competitors.

The background of the entire image is a vibrant sunburst pattern. It consists of numerous thin, radiating lines in shades of orange and yellow, creating a sense of energy and movement. The lines originate from a central point near the bottom and fan out towards the top corners of the frame.

# ***CPC INFLATION: CONTROLLING BUDGETS & MAXIMIZING VALUE***

***BY BEN STEELE, SENIOR EDITOR***

Inflation is hitting everywhere, even in your ad auctions. This year, the contributors offer guidance on navigating these increasing costs. Some note that directly seeking lower cost-per-click (CPC) prices may not be the answer. The advice includes:

- ★ Validate and own your campaign performance data to ensure that you have an accurate picture of expense and revenue.
- ★ Focus on business outcomes instead of individual key performance indicators (KPIs) like CPC.
- ★ Improve the quality of the campaigns and the value of conversions.
- ★ Diversify your campaigns to target different intents, buyer stages, and platforms.

The common thread that runs through the quotes is that you will be more successful extracting as much value as you can out of CPCs as they are, than you will be chasing cheaper options. A cost doesn't mean much until weighed against its benefit. In the coming year, you'll likely need to be very good at cost and benefit analysis.

If I had to summarize the next section's insights in three sentences, they would be:

- ★ Cost-cutting, for its own sake, isn't always the way.
- ★ Don't obsess over what you can't control; make the higher cost worth it.
- ★ Don't mindlessly follow the metrics fed to you. Validate your data.

# Insights In This Section

## Improve The Value Of A Click Instead Of Trying To Reduce The Cost

– Amy Hebdon, Founder + Managing Director, Paid Search Magic

## You Can't Control CPC, So Focus On What You Can

– Andrea Atzori, Director, Ambire

## Make Your Marketing Cost-Effective By Targeting Different Funnel Stages & Platforms

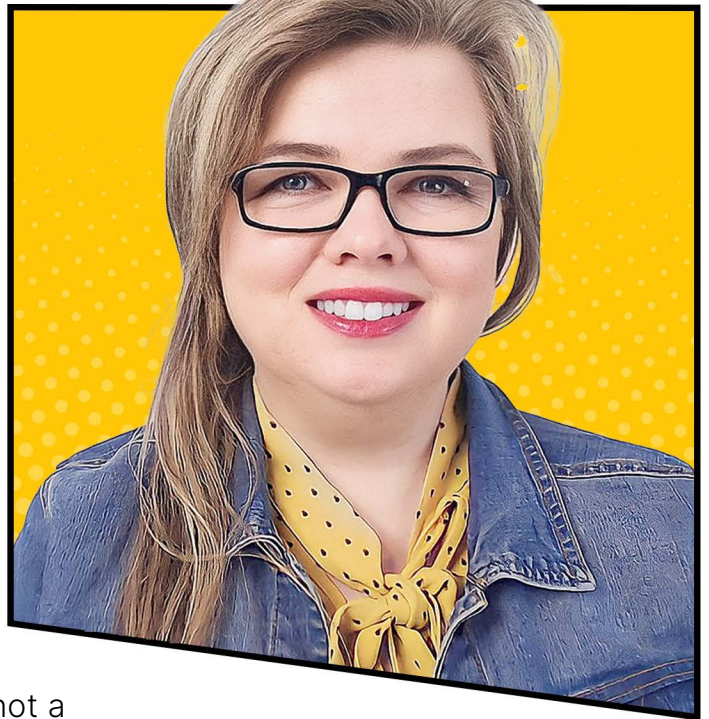
– Corey Morris, President/CEO, Voltage

## Own Your Sources Of Truth & Understand The Value Of A Lead

– Navah Hopkins, Evangelist, Optmyzr

**IMPROVE THE VALUE  
OF A CLICK INSTEAD  
OF TRYING TO REDUCE  
THE COST**

**AMY HEBDON**  
**FOUNDER + MANAGING DIRECTOR,**  
**PAID SEARCH MAGIC**



First, understand that cost per click (CPC) is not a strong key performance indicator (KPI).

The worst response to rising click costs is to attempt to lower average CPCs by adding lower-cost (and lower-quality) clicks.

Instead, work to get even more value from premium clicks by increasing the likelihood of conversion. Focus on landing page user experience (UX), clarify your offer to make it more desirable, and qualify your audience so that each click will likely result in a new customer.

By measuring and increasing profit per click, the impact of rising click costs diminishes.

***YOU CAN'T CONTROL CPC,  
SO FOCUS ON WHAT  
YOU CAN***

***ANDREA ATZORI***  
***DIRECTOR, AMBIRE***



Given the increasing concerns about what seem to be well-established trends of rising cost per click (CPC) – along with recent disclosures of orchestrated auctions and CPC hikes within certain advertising platforms – it comes as no surprise that the issue of CPC inflation has emerged as a matter of paramount concern for the vast majority of marketers and businesses.

Many who rely on paid media campaigns as a cornerstone of their strategies – whether aiming to draw traffic, facilitate customer acquisition, or both – have seen the impact of CPC inflation firsthand.

There is no doubt that, especially for small and medium enterprises, these are tough times. We have all heard stories of business owners concerned about how difficult it is just to make do.

So, should those entering the market now or not having the means to challenge bigger budgets just give up altogether and look for other options?

In my opinion, absolutely not. Although difficult, things can still be done to alleviate high advertising costs and direct campaigns toward higher profitability.

To start, we can focus on improving the overall campaign's and ad's quality; this is a given – a fundamental aspect that cannot be overlooked.

But we can also look at improving other metrics for which we have more direct control, like conversion rates and average transaction values.

Basic things and common sense will go a long way here.

Furthermore, we must shift our attention from marketing indicators to actual business objectives and measurements. This means moving away from outdated attribution models like last click, and focusing more on business-focused outcomes like customer lifetime value (CLV) and profit margin.

In our endeavors to efficiently handle the challenge of increasing CPC across well-known advertising platforms like Google Ads and Facebook, it is vital to investigate alternative and less competitive avenues.

Platforms focused on more niche topics and phrases, such as Quora and Reddit, can offer opportunities to alleviate the financial burden linked to costly CPCs and highly competitive search terms.

Consequently, as we plan for 2024, we must emphasize experimentation and testing on less saturated platforms.

By diversifying our advertising channels and contemplating these alternatives, we can optimize our advertising budget, extend our reach to a wider audience, and reduce the impact of escalating CPCs.

Ultimately, CPCs are just a number – a number that is relative to its context and that, as such, can only be measured within that context.

So, while our ability to control inflating CPCs might be generally low, focusing on what we can do to influence the context might help us to strive for and deliver above-average results and, as such, worry less about CPCs.



## Handling CPC Inflation

As historical data suggests – and trends continue to rise – the cost per click (CPC) for Google Ads is expected to increase across various industries in 2024. This comes in a year when the economy has already faced its share of challenges.

Between 2022 and 2023, the [average CPC increased](#) by approximately 5% and cost per lead (CPL) by about 20%, signifying a significant jump from previously documented years. Reflecting on past CPC inflation rates, the projected CPC for 2024 is expected to continue upward.

One major cause of rising CPC rates is competition. An increasing number of businesses are establishing their online presence. Securing that top spot in search results becomes increasingly challenging, unfortunately driving up the CPC.

To combat the rising costs, the most important thing to do is to be aware. Acknowledge the rising costs and formulate a strategy that benefits your clients without straining their finances or reducing ad spend.

How do you address the rising costs for yourself or your clients?

Consider diversifying your approach by launching ad campaigns targeting different stages of the funnel. Applying this strategy helps optimize your marketing cost, which allows for implementing other cost-effective marketing tactics like email marketing, social media, and SEO, which complement your paid search campaigns.

# OWN YOUR SOURCES OF TRUTH & UNDERSTAND THE VALUE OF A LEAD

**NAVAH HOPKINS**  
EVANGELIST, OPTMYZR



The big theme of 2024 is owning your sources of truth and acknowledging that you will need to test many “proven” strategies and mechanics. While every year can lay claim to “getting comfortable with not being comfortable,” I expect 2024 to be particularly full of tests and questions.

A few contributing factors to this are:

1. Due to the recent evidence of inflating cost per click (CPC) and influencing the order of ad auction winners, there is some hesitancy around (Google) ad platform tech and its reporting.

While there are valid reasons why auction winners or ad prices have been adjusted, the larger issue with many advertisers lies within a need for more transparency, coupled with depreciated features (like feed-only PMax and limited data in search term reports).

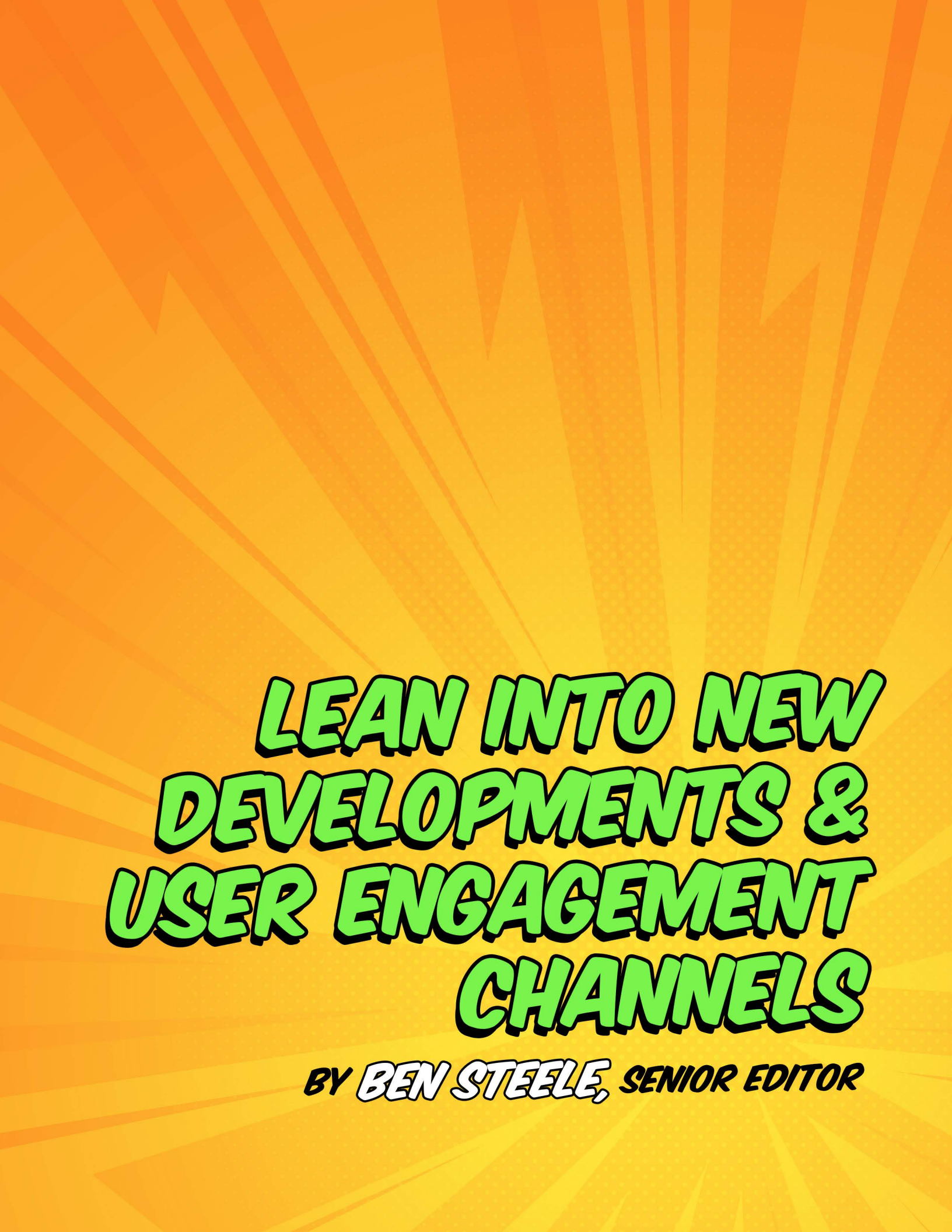
This may lead to mounting skepticism among PPC practitioners if that transparency isn’t communicated. I’m hopeful Google will be able to regain its well-established trust with advertisers, but it’s important to acknowledge the impact on 2024 PPC trends.

2. 2024 will be the first full year with no more Universal Analytics, and I expect some brands will still be sorting their data going into 2024. Combined with the increasing tracking restrictions from iOS updates and regulatory pressure, I'm expecting many brands to have to invest in new benchmarks.
3. Ad types have shifted, so you may need to reevaluate budgets assigned to different types. For example, Demand Gen ads replaced Discovery and truly do appear to be an improvement, while Performance Max lost its "feed-only" campaign type. While some of these changes are benign, others will require testing. Existing budgets may not account for that.

My strongest advice for 2024 is to make sure you understand the value of your leads so you can opt into value-based bidding and conversions. While many things are changing, that appears to be the one constant: The more accurate conversion data you can feed into the system, the easier time the algorithm will have making your budget work.

If you're unsure what your conversion values should be, start by looking closely at your conversion rate by channel, and multiplying that by the average value of your customers. If you truly can't commit to an average, go with the lowest customer value, and then you can always correct with enhanced conversions.

As you're testing, be sure you're making notes and excluding data as needed. And don't be afraid of the wild and crazy tests.

The background of the entire page is a vibrant sunburst pattern. It consists of numerous thin, radiating lines in shades of orange and yellow, creating a sense of energy and movement. The lines are more densely packed in the center and become more sparse towards the edges.

# **LEAN INTO NEW DEVELOPMENTS & USER ENGAGEMENT CHANNELS**

***BY BEN STEELE, SENIOR EDITOR***

Grouping this set of trends was a bit more difficult. A few of the quotes spoke about newness and new developments, both in platforms and in channels.

Earlier in the book, contributors wrote about validating your data and reexamining the data metrics you use for success.

With all the potential challenges on the horizon for 2024, diversification is another way you can insulate your businesses from disruption.

Adding more channels and sources of data requires:

- ★ Clear cross-platform strategy, messaging, and identity.
- ★ Willingness to experiment to discover positive and negative outcomes.
- ★ Buy-in from stakeholders to be flexible about key performance indicators (KPIs) – and willingness to engage in activity that’s more difficult to measure directly.

So, this is a section about leaning into change, but in service of marketing strategies that have always been effective. If I had to summarize the key insights of this section in three sentences, they would be:

- ★ Meet people where they are isn’t a new concept, but it will require you to learn new platforms and new ways of engagement.
- ★ Stubborn adherence to one channel or one data source won’t work: You need new channels, new sources of data, and a model to draw insights from various sources.
- ★ Embrace the new in service of what you’ve always known about marketing.

# Insights In This Section

## Meet Users Where They Are & Engage Them In New Ways

– Alex Macura, Founder/CEO, Your Digital Assembly

## Create Holistic Strategies & Cohesive Messaging To Win In The Attention Economy

– Amalia Fowler, Principal Strategist, Good AF Consulting

## Lean Into Privacy-First Advertising & Measurement

– Ben Wood, Director of Growth & Innovation, Hallam

## Embrace New Models Of Audience Targeting & New Channels

– Ginny Marvin, Ads Product Liaison, Google

## Mind Meld With GA4 & Embrace New Data Models

– Lisa Raehsler, Founder And SEM Strategy Consultant, Big Click Co.



## Leveraging User-Generated Content

In the age of personalization, what's more customized than user-generated content (UGC)? Any time a customer shares their experience and reviews your product or service, that's authentic feedback that can be leveraged to propel your brand even further.

It's this kind of genuine relationship between customer and brand that encourages interaction and can help bring new customers on board. Content creation on social media is an excellent source of engagement and exposure, with the power to make your brand go viral.

If you're able to establish that level of connection with your customers and create an organic, loyal community, that's value you can bank on.

## The Rise Of Online Video Shopping

Want to increase your engagement while giving customers convenient, real-time access to your products? That's the power of online video shopping – the influencer marketing strategy that allows your customers to browse, shop, and purchase – all via a dynamic, engaging live stream.

Live video shopping is primarily done through influencers on social media platforms. This makes it a powerful opportunity to build your brand presence on social media. Influencers bring an audience, but instead of simply providing a link with a code, users can buy directly through the platform right there and then.

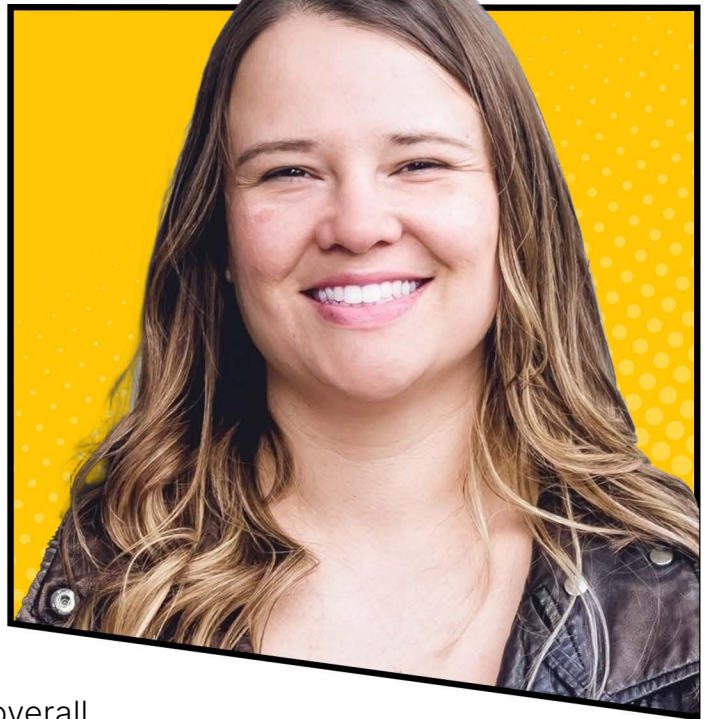
Given its relative newness, taking your shopping experience to influencer livestreams can help you stand out from competitors and give you the edge you're looking for. But you will need to prepare carefully to make online video shopping a success.

## **The Future Of Marketing**

What does 2024 hold for marketing trends? We'll find out in a few short months. Which trends will work for your brand? You'll have to discover that for yourself. But don't waste any time – you don't want to be left behind.

# **CREATE HOLISTIC STRATEGIES & COHESIVE MESSAGING TO WIN IN THE ATTENTION ECONOMY**

**AMALIA FOWLER**  
PRINCIPAL STRATEGIST,  
GOOD AF CONSULTING



For 2024, the focus needs to be both on the overall media mix and accurate measurement. We should see a trend towards more holistic planning, looking at the integration between platforms and optimizing for an overall marketing goal, instead of laser focus on individual platform key performance indicators (KPIs).

For example, if you are using search ads only but not running social or video, you're missing opportunities at the beginning of the user journey. Consider owned properties, too. If marketers are siloing their thinking and efforts by only looking on-platform, they're missing out on optimization opportunities elsewhere.

To cut through the noise and stand out in the attention economy, marketers need a cohesive media mix with messaging that meets users' needs at each stage of their journey – across paid, owned, and earned marketing efforts. It is not simply about platform choice, but also ad messaging, specific calls-to-action, and ensuring message match from channel to channel, and ad to landing page.

Finally, if you aren't accurately measuring any of the above, you will run into considerable issues. The forced adoption of GA4 and continued discussions around tracking mean importing offline conversions, and the use of tools like UTM tags are more important than ever.

# LEAN INTO PRIVACY-FIRST ADVERTISING & MEASUREMENT

**BEN WOOD**  
DIRECTOR OF GROWTH & INNOVATION,  
HALLAM



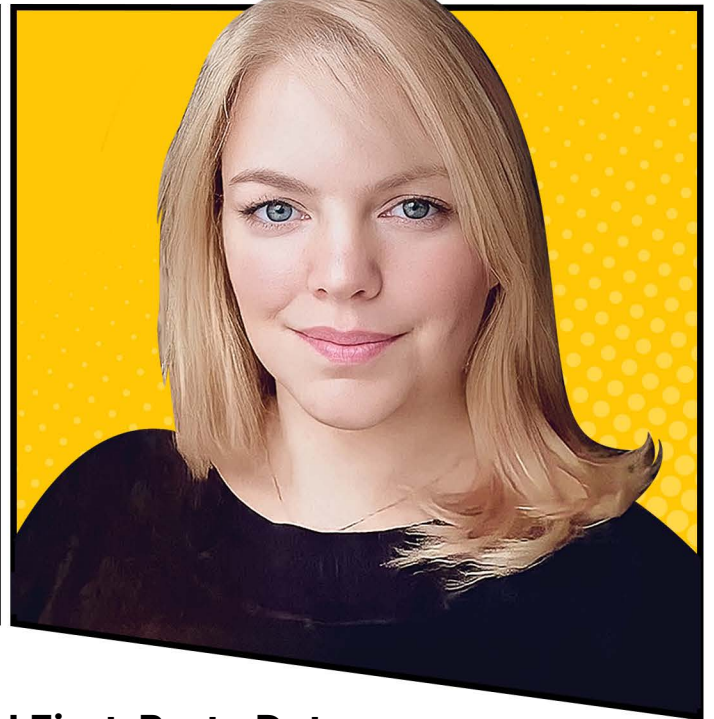
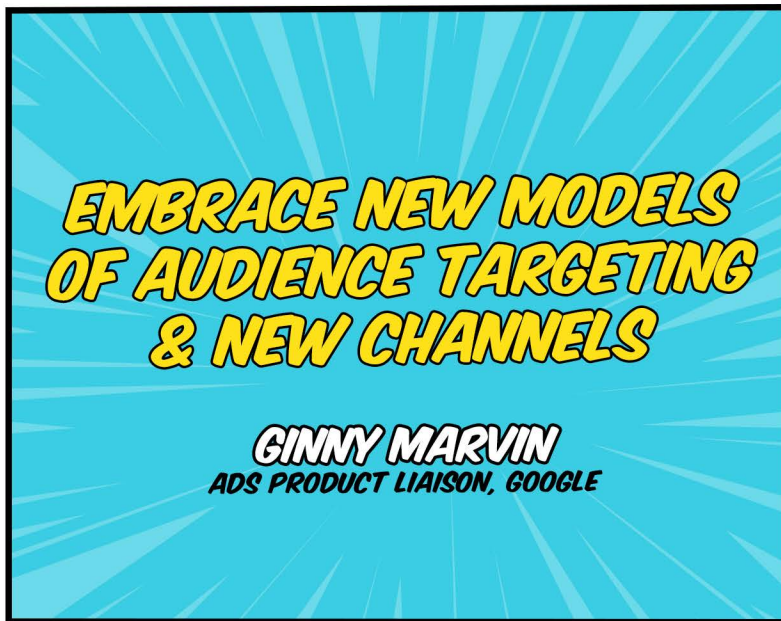
A key trend that will continue into 2024 and beyond is privacy-first measurement and advertising: serving targeted ads without disclosing users' information. With Google finally set to phase out third-party cookies in 2024, we'll see more advertisers trialing contextual advertising to get ahead.

We've already seen major brands such as the Guardian, Bauer, and Haymarket teaming up to [run a large-scale test of a privacy-enhancing technology](#) for 'post cookie' advertising, and this will ripple down to smaller advertisers in the year ahead as the effectiveness of third-party targeting options starts to fizzle out. This is also the focus of the [Privacy Sandbox](#) project.

We'll continue to see challenges around measurement.

Multi-touch attribution often attributes too much weight to lower-funnel advertising tactics and fails to recognize the value of brand and upper-funnel advertising investments.

I expect to see more advertisers trial alternative tactics, such as media mix modeling (econometrics) and incrementality experiments, to triangulate return on investment (ROI).



## Privacy, Audiences, And Consented First-Party Data

With the coming deprecation of third-party cookies and greater privacy regulations and expectations, having a first-party data strategy is even more valuable and important now – and going into 2024.

These shifts are already changing how we think about audience targeting, for example. Similar audiences sunset in August 2023. First-party audience segments can be used instead as a signal in optimized targeting, audience expansion, and Smart Bidding to reach relevant audiences and measure in privacy-centric ways.

Using your first-party data also needs to be easier. New tools will help businesses more easily use their consented first-party data – regardless of where it is stored.

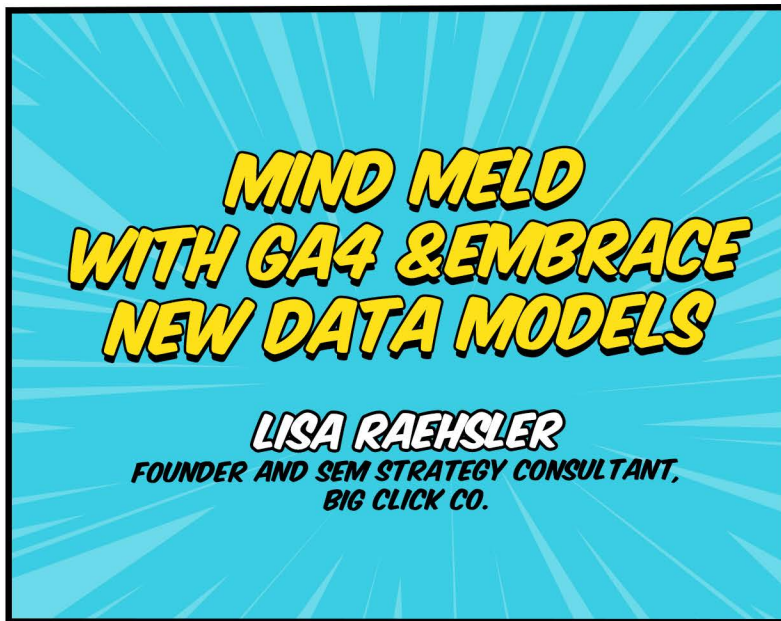
Speaking of analytics, Google Analytics 4 was built with privacy at its core. That makes it more resilient to privacy changes that cause less user data to be observable via cookies, and more data to be aggregated to protect user anonymity. When accounts have sufficient data, GA4 uses AI to build predictive audiences that can be used in Ads campaigns.

## Video, Video, Video

Whether it's in short form on mobile or long form on TV, video keeps growing. Video has traditionally been used by brand marketers to drive awareness, but some incredibly talented marketers have been successfully using video to drive performance.

Expect to see brand marketers move down the funnel and use video to drive performance, and to see performance advertisers continue using video to drive performance, and also move up the funnel to drive more awareness goals.

And, of course, AI will also help with video creation – it can already automatically reformat horizontal video ads to vertical or square videos, for example!

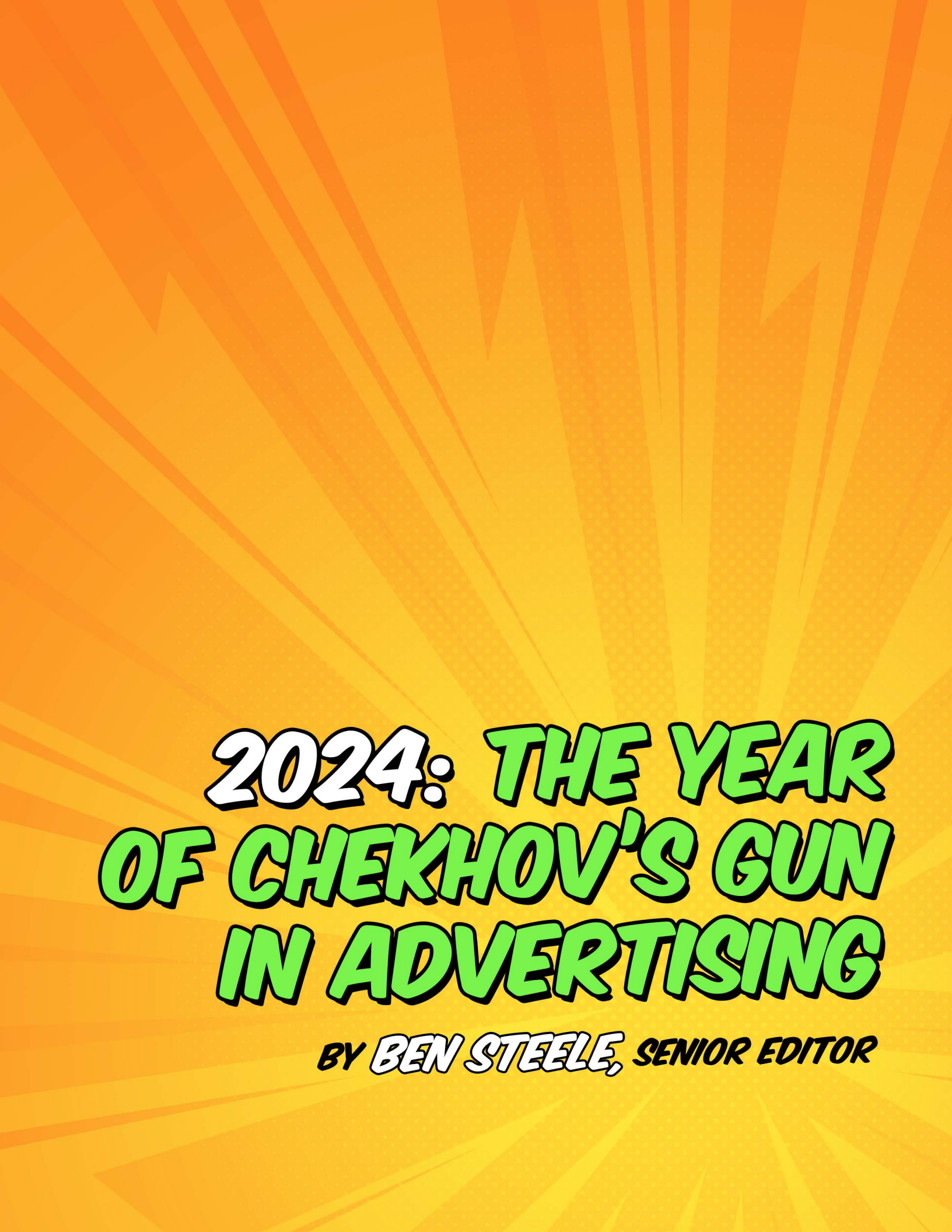


The migration to Google Analytics 4 has been chaotic for some advertisers, but should level out and become more useful in 2024.

Even though most advertisers have migrated to the new version of GA4, many still need to customize it to use its full power to extract the most actionable data. This is invaluable for paid search efforts and optimizing strategies, budgets, and creatives across all digital platforms such as display, video, shopping, social media, and retargeting.

The events-based model gives more in-depth, full insights into traffic acquisition, audiences, and engagement from PPC and other channels.

Advertisers who mind-meld, embrace, and excel at this new model will have a competitive advantage and improve performance across digital channels.



# **2024: THE YEAR OF CHEKHOV'S GUN IN ADVERTISING**

***BY BEN STEELE, SENIOR EDITOR***

The narrative principle of Chekhov's Gun states that everything in a narrative must have a purpose. If a writer inserts a gun, then the gun should, at some point, be fired. Many writers introduce this literary device early to build tension and suspense; "It's coming ... But when?"

Is it just me, or does that sound a lot like third-party cookies?

Platforms have been talking about many things keeping their readers, I mean, users in suspense – automatic [Performance Max upgrades](#), [automatic GA4 migrations](#), [third-party cookies going away](#), and a rollout of [Search Generative Experience](#).

Some of these events have already begun. But in 2024, many of the ominous big changes you've been warned about will finish or begin rolling out.

2024 brings you opportunities to distinguish yourself by being an early adopter – not just of new technology, but of new thought.

It's a year to be flexible, to lean into change, but also to stay grounded in your fundamental knowledge of your discipline and your customers.

Blindly pressing on with shiny new developments isn't the way forward, but neither is trying to stick with old models.

On the other hand, the core principles of reaching your audience don't change that much. None of the changes in the next year should shake the foundations of what makes you a good marketer: your intuition, connection with your audience, and ability to think beyond KPIs and attribution models.

If you know your craft, know when to lean into productive change, and know when to avoid change for its own sake, you might find disruptions rolling off your back. But it may take rethinking how you track success and how you spend your time.

# Add Your Thoughts

Thank you for reading PPC Trends 2024. Do you have thoughts to add? Trends you think we missed? Post about it and tag us on [LinkedIn](#), [X \(formerly Twitter\)](#), or [Facebook](#)!

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