

Choosing Your Search Engine Marketing Path

(Part 2)

After reading Part 1 of “Choosing Your Search Engine Marketing Path” you should have a good idea of some high level preliminary questions to ask yourself before choosing a search management vendor for your company. As promised, in Part Two, we will dive deeper into some areas to help you get the most out of your choice.

Customer Support: This is very important for any implementation of a new system. You will need to determine the amount and type of support your company needs.

If you decide on an agency for bid management then you will want to know:

- How many people make up your team?
- What are their areas of expertise?
- Will you have phone updates and strategy calls with your team?
- What will the frequency of those calls be?
- Are the other clients they work with in a similar vertical as you?

If a technology solution is for you then you will want to know:

- What type of training they will offer?
- Will it be live phone walkthroughs, WebEx or Onsite Training?
- Will you have a contact for phone support when needed and will this be the same contact every time so you can develop a rapport with them and they will be familiar with your account?

Campaign Management: This is an important aspect of a bid management system. If you go with an agency, it is simple because they have the internal tools to easily copy campaigns from engine to engine, as well as manage keyword expansions.

If you decide to use a technology solution, you will want to know what tools are at your disposal for building a campaign and syndicating it to all of the engines.

Another aspect of campaign management, and one key reason for bringing on a bid management system, is to grow your account through an increase keyword set. You will want to make sure:

- The system has tools for keyword expansion built into the User Interface (UI).
- Determine how the software expands keywords.
- How easy is it to theme out the keyword lists that get generated from the tool, and if it can bulk-upload your list.



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Along with the ease of growing your account through keyword growth and campaign mirroring, you will want to know what engines are supported and how quickly your solution adapts each publisher's new capabilities.

Bidding: Whether your goal is to optimize your buys by cost per action, earnings per click, or margin or gross profit dollars, you will want to know the limitations of each system and if it will work for your company.

Once you figure out your goal metrics you will want to know:

- How often bids are calculated
- How often they get pushed out to the publishers. Once per day or multiple times per day?
- Is day parting available?
- Are you able to bid separately on the search and content networks?

You will also want to determine how your agency or licensed technology will get your revenue data:

- Will be pixel or feed based?
- Will you have to push this data to them or can they pull it via ftp?
- What type of checks and balances are in place to verify data integrity.

Internal Systems: As with any technology change, there are internal system considerations. How you do things, most likely, isn't the same as any other business. Remember, with the implementation of new technologies, old technologies must be augmented or phased out.

The important thing to remember here is that when going with a new technology, you will need and want to remove any proprietary systems that will hold you back. No matter what solution you choose, agency or license technology, your account team SHOULD be willing to help.

If your first bid management choice doesn't work out, switching costs from one vendor to the other will be minimal and your new team will be more than willing to help switch you over.

In our experience, there is no self-service bid management system or agency that has everything you need and want. Since businesses have different revenue models and goals it is nearly impossible to do, unless of course you develop a tool internally from the ground up. That's why it is important to find a solution that best matches your businesses goals, visions and expectations.

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