Google Advertising 101 for Lawyers

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Finding and sourcing clients as a law firm or attorney can be difficult. There are strict rules and guidelines that effect how and where a lawyer can advertise their services. Plus, there is a lot of competition in the market vying for the same clients you are. So where do you start when it comes to marketing your firm? The answer to that question may depend on your practice area, but in this post we will break down the basics of Google advertising for a law firm so you can assess whether or not this is a good strategy for your practice.

Google Advertising Basics for Lawyers

Google Ads is a PPC aka “Pay Per Click” advertising system. Although Google has a wide variety of business ventures, from selling mobile phones to YouTube, the Ads program generates the vast majority of its revenue and has enabled it to become the dominant tech company that it is today.

With PPC advertising, there are no recurring monthly charges, and you do not pay for impressions (i.e. when your ad shows up in the search results). You only pay when somebody sees your ad and actually clicks on it to visit your website.

Google Ads deliver highly qualified prospects

PPC is a great advertising method for search engines because you can ensure that you are paying for a targeted prospect.

When somebody searches a keyword that is relevant to your business, sees your advertisement in the search results, and clicks your ad to visit your website, you can be pretty confident that this is a web visitor that is likely to buy your product or service. They were searching on Google for it, after all.

The search engine wins because they get paid a fee for that click. The customer wins because they just discovered a good potential product or service to buy. And you, the advertiser, win because you just bought a highly targeted potential customer.

This win-win-win aspect of PPC advertising is one of the reasons why online advertising can be much more effective than offline advertising.

Does Google Advertising work well for law firms?

Google advertising can have a drastic effect on the amount of business your firm can receive. However, using the Ads platform can be tricky for beginners, and also very expensive.

Even though you only pay per click, those clicks can cost hundreds of dollars in certain instances. So it's important to know what you are getting into upfront. It's also advisable to hire a professional to manage your ad campaigns in order to avoid wasting money.

Law related search terms are among the priciest keywords that you can bid on in Ads. In fact, a 2016 study found that the top 5 most expensive search terms on Google were all related to searching for a lawyer, and 20 of the top 25 search terms were from the legal industry.

Clearly Ads can cost a lot of money, but this data should also tell you that it can really work. Google does not just arbitrarily set the prices for a click. They are determined by supply and demand. There is a steady supply of potential clients searching, but the demand from attorneys to buy those clicks is also very high.

With this in mind, you will want to be extremely picky about the way you set up a Google ad campaign to avoid overspending. If set correctly, you can see your profits soar. If done wrong, then you can forget hiring that new paralegal.

Should I invest in Ads for my law firm?

At this point, you might be wondering if Google advertising is worth it for your law firm. The honest answer is...maybe.

Ads can drive a ton of growth for some firms, but it all comes down to what type of firm you have and who your clients are. Some areas of law are still heavily driven by referrals which means Google advertising won't be as effective.

For example, the following areas of law often are heavily relationship focused and new business tends to come from word of mouth more than advertising:

- Securities law
- M&A law
- International law
- High net worth estate planning
- Business litigation

- Real estate

However, certain areas of law, often times the ones which may have more of a stigma attached to them, can be prime candidates for a Google advertising campaign. For example, people tend not to want to discuss their personal situations with friends when facing certain types of legal issues:

- Criminal charges
- Employment matters
- DUI/DWI
- Bankruptcy
- Personal injury

Instead of asking for referrals, these people will often turn to Google to search for information or find a lawyer to call. When your ad shows up at the top of the search results, there's a good chance you will be the lawyer they contact.

Ads won't be the answer for every firm, but the key is to find those certain areas of law where client referrals seem lackluster. This is a great opportunity to use Ads to fill the gap.

One firm's Ads success story...

According to one Charleston, WV law firm, Bailey Javins & Carter LC, the decision to invest in PPC advertising was scary at first due to the high bid expectations set forth by Google. They elected to hire an Ads expert to help manage their campaign.

> ""For our law firm, we specialize in workplace accidents and personal injury which sees high bid costs. This led us to have our Ads budget managed by professionals to help lower our costs.""

Although it was intimidating at first, seeing the upside after gaining just one client gave them reassurance. Their law firm saw a 15% increase in new client leads as a result of their decision to enter the Ads arena, helping them drive sustainable growth in their business.

Setting Up a Google Advertising Campaign for Your Law Firm

If you think Google advertising might be a good growth strategy for your law firm, you should spend some time familiarizing yourself with the program, even if you plan to hire a professional to manage it for you.

With any kind of marketing, the better understanding you have, the more effective it will be for you. Too many lawyers just rely completely on outside "professionals" and end up being taken advantage of, simply because they don't know the first thing about the marketing strategy they are using.

Failing to understand the marketing strategy you are using is likely to lead to mistakes and wasted money. So here are some things you should understand about how Ads works before you start creating a campaign or looking for someone to hire.

It's all about choosing the right keywords

An effective Google advertising campaign starts with the right keyword strategy. Because of the high cost associated with legal keywords, finding the right keywords to target is critical.

You should avoid bidding on any general terms like "lawyer" or "attorney" because they are not specific enough, and you can't ensure that these searches are from people who will be good potential clients for you.

It might be tempting to want to target these one word keywords when you see that there are 10,000 searches a month, but the truth of the matter is that these searchers are more than likely in the earliest stages of their buyer's journey, and they are not yet ready to hire you.

Precision keywords reduce your costs

Bidding on "long tail" keywords can help reduce your Google advertising costs. For example, the addition of words such as "best," "near me," and "free consultation" may lower your bid prices because they make the search term more precise.

You should try to use terms directly associated with your area of law and your location. For instance, if you are a lawyer that specializes in personal injury cases, some good and specific keywords might be:

- Car accident lawyer in Glendale

- Accident insurance lawyer near me
- Best local traffic accident attorney

The Google keyword planner gives you the ability to play around with keyword ideas and identify new keywords you may not have considered. This tool will show you the estimated search volume and the average cost per click for each one so you can get a good idea of what keywords will be cost effective for your firm.

Types of keywords in Ads

It's also important to note that Google has different types of keywords that you can bid on. Keyword types will help you tell Google when your ads should appear and when they should not.

The type of keyword you use will affect your costs and your conversion rate. You will want to use a combination of different keyword types in order to optimize your campaigns for maximum ROI.

Here are the types of keywords Google offers:

- Exact Match
- Phrase Match
- Broad Match
- Broad Match Modifier
- Negative Keywords

Exact match keywords

Exact match keywords are those which are typed into Google exactly like they are entered into your ad campaign. For example, an exact match occurs you are bidding on the exact match keyword "divorce lawyer Dallas" and the person types in "divorce lawyer Dallas."

This type of keyword bidding gives you the best conversion rate at a much lower cost per click. But on the downside, it also significantly limits who will see your ads. If the person types "best divorce attorney Dallas" instead, your ad wouldn't show up even though that search has virtually the same intent as "divorce lawyer Dallas" does.

Phrase match keywords

Phrase match keywords are similar to exact match, but they only require a certain phrase from the query to match exactly, and the rest of the search term can be anything.

For example, if you had the phrase match keyword “divorce lawyer Dallas,” your ad could still appear on a search for “best divorce lawyer Dallas” because it still matches the phrase you specified exactly. It just has additional words surrounding it.

Broad match keywords

Broad match keywords are basically the opposite of exact match. They will show an ad when a potential client searches for words similar to that of your keyword, but not necessarily exact.

Google is smart enough to understand synonyms and related words, so it will attempt to interpret the search query and pair it with any broad match keywords in your ad campaign.

Broad match keywords can significantly increase your ad coverage and your ads will show up for many more people. But, the disadvantage would be that this type of keyword can trigger erroneous impressions and clicks.

For instance, if you have a broad match term in your keywords like “corporate lawyer,” someone who searches for the generic term “lawyer” may still see your ad. If that person was actually looking for a divorce lawyer, you could end up paying for an erroneous click.

For this reason, you may want to use broad match keywords sparingly.

Broad match modifier keywords

Broad match modifier is a hybrid approach between exact match and broad match. It helps solve the issue of allowing matches that are close but not exact, while still limiting the erroneous impressions and clicks.

A broad match modifier keyword allows you to select certain words that must be in the search query, but while disregarding the order of those words. So for example, a broad match modifier keyword could be “+injury +lawyer +dallas” (Google uses the + sign to identify broad match modifier words).

This keyword could trigger ads for any search query as long as it includes all three of those words. For example, “Dallas personal injury lawyer” or “injury lawyer in Dallas Texas” would both potentially trigger your ad to display.

Negative keywords

Another great way to control your spend and not waste money on irrelevant keywords is to use negative keywords. Negative keywords will prevent your ad from displaying any time the negative keyword is included in the search query.

You will generally want to place all the areas of law that you do not practice into your negative keyword list. That way, if somebody searches anything related to law but not to your specific practice area, your ad will not show up.

As your Ads campaign matures, you will want to continually revisit the negative keyword list and keep it up to date. Google will show you what types of search queries are triggering your ads to appear. If any of the queries seem erroneous or unrelated to your law practice, you can add them to your negative keyword list to avoid wasting money on those searches in the future.

Tips for creating effective Google Ads

Once you have created a list of all the keywords you want to use, most of the hard work is done. The next step is to create the actual ads themselves.

You will want to create multiple ads with different variations of content. This will help you test to find out what language converts best. It will also enable you to precisely target your ads based on the search term.

An effective ad should do a few things:

1. **Grab the person's attention**
    - Your headline should include captivating language which answers the search query and grabs the person's attention.
2. **Respond to the search query**
    - You should plan to include many of the same keywords used in the search term in the ad. The closer your ad copy is to what the person typed, the more likely they will be to click on it.
3. **Build trust**
    - You don't want to be overly salesy, but you should still consider using a few carefully placed words and phrases to build the person's trust, e.g. "confidential case evaluation" or "free consultation," etc.

Finally, since a law firm is a local oriented business, you should also plan to include your phone number directly in the ad. Many people may be inclined to call rather than click. Google has a specific feature to allow this called call extensions. You pay the same amount whether the person calls, or clicks to visit your website.

Local Services Ads

Did you know more than 50% of potential clients use online search engines to find a lawyer? Appearing when and where clients are searching is crucial to attracting new business.

This is where Google's Local Services Ads can help. In short, Local Services Ads are pay-per-lead ads offered through Google that appear at the top of search engine results. They match prospective customers searching for a service with relevant businesses in the same area. The result? Customers get reliable suggestions, while companies see a better return on investment with more qualified leads.

Even better, with Google's Local Services Ads for Clio, you can sign up for and manage a Local Services Ads account, set up and run ad campaigns, capture new leads, and measure campaign performance all within a single platform.

Here are some of the additional benefits:

- **Build client trust**: Earn a "Google Screened" badge verifying your business is qualified to offer legal services.
- **Control your budget**: Set your weekly budget and pause your ad at any time.
- **Pay for results**: Only pay when a potential lead contacts you through the ad, resulting in higher quality leads and cases. Plus, new Google Ads users will receive $500 in ad credits when they spend $500.

Learn more here, or book a live demonstration with a Clio expert.

Summary

Ads is an incredibly powerful advertising channel for many types of businesses, including certain law firms. If you set it up properly, you can expect to see a steady uptick in inquiries about your services. And if you do a good job of managing these leads and converting them into clients, you should see a positive ROI and achieve sustainable growth for your practice..

The most important thing before starting out is to develop a basic understanding of how Google advertising works. Whether you hope to manage your own campaigns or hire an expert, the more you know about Ads, the more effective it will be as a marketing channel.

The key thing to focus on is keyword planning. This will help ensure that your ads only show up for relevant queries and you aren't spending money for erroneous impressions and clicks.

And you will want to spend some time writing great ads that are compelling, responsive, and helpful in establishing trust amongst prospective clients.

About Clio

Clio is the global leader in legal AI, powering legal work across the profession, from law firms of every size to corporate legal teams, government agencies, and courts. Its Intelligent Legal Work Platform unites the business and practice of law, connecting the people, information, and processes behind legal work. Clio's AI brings the context together with legal sources drawn from Clio Library, a growing collection of more than one billion legal documents. Over 400,000 legal professionals in more than 130 countries rely on Clio to run their legal world. Learn more at www.clio.com.