

A photograph of two men in an office environment. The man on the left, with light brown hair and wearing a blue patterned shirt, is looking down at a laptop. The man on the right, with dark skin and glasses, wearing a pink patterned shirt, is also looking at the laptop. The background is slightly blurred, showing other people and office furniture.

CASE STUDY

Columbus efficiently boosts conversions with a Search Ads 360 Smart Bidding strategy

Tags

Search Ads 360

The Goals

- Help a leading telco brand adapt to consumers' increasing use of mobile on the path to purchase
- Reduce time spent manually optimizing search bids across multiple accounts
- Reduce cost per acquisition (CPA) for the brand's post-paid campaigns

The Approach

- Adopted Search Ads 360 Smart Bidding feature to optimize its client's search campaigns with real-time insights
- Used time decay and cross-device attribution model based on insights from conversion data

The Results

- 36% increase in conversion rate
- 28% CPA decrease QoQ
- 36% CPA decrease YoY
- 50% decrease in time spent on campaign optimization

Since 2006, [Columbus](#), a Merkle company, has prided itself as being a data-driven digital marketing agency that delivers end-to-end brand experiences for its clients. Columbus helps brands bridge the gap between their business and the people they want to connect with.

One of Columbus' clients is a leading entertainment and telco provider in Australia that consistently deals with significant budgets, a variety of audiences, and a range of complex accounts. Because of consumers' growing mobile usage, Columbus knew that optimizing its client's search campaigns to serve ads in the right moments — and on the right devices — would be highly complex and time-consuming.

In the past, Columbus focused on maximizing the brand's qualified traffic within a target spend and conversions were a secondary goal. Up against Australia's increasingly competitive telco industry, Columbus switched its strategy to efficiently maximize conversions driven by search with a focus on the telco brand's top product category: postpaid phone plan campaigns.

To streamline management of its client's search campaigns, Columbus teamed up with Google and turned to a solution powered by machine learning: [Search Ads 360](#) Smart Bidding.

Tapping the power of machine learning to optimize in real time

Smart Bidding helped Columbus make the most out of its client's search budget by automatically managing and adjusting bids across all its accounts. Smart Bidding uses machine learning to analyze a campaign's performance in real time and then determines optimal search bids based on each user's context. For example, if a user searched for telco-related queries on their smartphone, Search Ads 360 would automatically increase mobile bids on relevant keywords as they're more likely to lead to a conversion.

To get a better understanding of consumers' paths to conversion, Columbus analyzed its client's customer information and discovered three things:

1. There was a significant time lag in the majority of online conversions, with many being generated between 12 and 30 days from the first interaction.
2. The majority of paths to conversion included multiple touchpoints and interactions on search.
3. Mobile activity was key — 50% of clicks and 48% of conversions were on a mobile device.

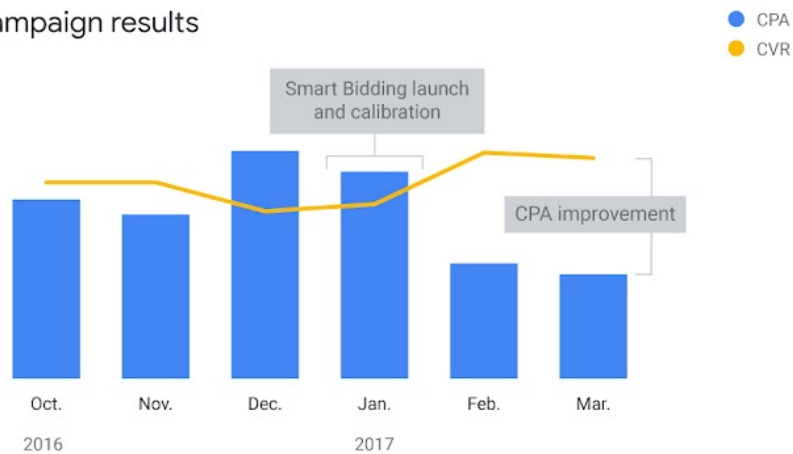
Based on those insights, Columbus determined that a time-decay and cross-device attribution model could make the most of its client's digital information over time. That would allow the agency to automatically optimize bids toward its KPI and CPA targets based on each campaign's real-time performance.

Smart Bidding leads to boosted conversions and lower costs

Between Columbus' close collaboration with Google and a new strategy fuelled by machine learning, the agency was able to reach new levels of efficiency for its telco client. Columbus drove an impressive 40% decrease in CPA within the first month of adopting Smart Bidding, and a 36% increase in conversion rate (CVR) within the first two months.

Quarter on quarter, Smart Bidding helped Columbus deliver a 28% CPA decrease and drive additional conversions, even with a reduced budget. When that spend was increased, the agency still saw a significant YoY increase in conversions with a 36% decrease in CPA. "Partnering with Search Ads 360 for Smart Bidding allowed us to take our paid search activity to the next level," said Maud Durieu, business director at Columbus. "Implementing Smart Bidding has been a game-changer for us and we're excited to see further development in the feature."

Postpaid campaign results



With the understanding that mobile performance would be crucial to its client’s success, Columbus was thrilled to see its CTR and CVR rates improve substantially across all devices.

Device	CTR	CVR
Desktop	+75%	+15%
Mobile	+39%	+11%
Tablet	+20%	+3%

Smart Bidding also helped Columbus see that its client’s mobile performance improved when the brand appeared higher in users’ search results, and as a result, the agency optimized bids to improve its average position by 25% QoQ — leading to a 39% improvement in CTR and an 11% improvement in CPA. The new bidding strategy also cut the amount of time Columbus spent optimizing campaigns in half, which ultimately inspired the brand to roll out Smart Bidding across all of its search accounts.

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