Ads audit checklist: Google, Facebook, Instagram and LinkedIn

A 53-point self-check for your Google, Facebook, Instagram and LinkedIn ads. Find out whether your tracking, budgets, targeting and ads are working, and where money is being wasted.

Most ad accounts don't fail in one big way. They leak money in lots of small ones: tracking that counts the wrong things, budgets that run out by lunchtime, searches that have nothing to do with your business, and ads nobody has changed in a year.

This checklist helps you find those leaks yourself. You don't need to be an expert to use it, but you will need access to your ad accounts, or someone who has it.

How to use it

Tick an item only if you've checked it and you're confident it's true. If you don't know, leave it unticked. That's useful to know too.

Start with section 1. If your tracking is wrong, every other number in your accounts is wrong with it. Skip any platform you don't advertise on, and score yourself out of the items that apply.

1. Tracking and measurement

- [ ] **Sales and enquiries are tracked.** Every platform you advertise on records the actions that matter, like purchases, enquiries, bookings or calls.
- [ ] **Only real results count as conversions.** Things like page views or "add to cart" aren't counted as conversions alongside sales, which makes results look better than they are.
- [ ] **Conversions have values.** Each conversion has a dollar value, or at least a sensible estimate, so the platforms can tell a big sale from a small one.
- [ ] **The numbers match your sales.** Each month, you compare what the platforms report with the orders or leads in your shop or customer database.
- [ ] **Sales aren't counted twice.** You know that Google and Facebook can both claim the same customer, and you don't add their numbers together.
- [ ] **Phone and offline sales are counted.** Calls, quotes and sales that close later are recorded and, where possible, sent back to the ad platforms.
- [ ] **Links are tagged.** Ad links carry tracking tags, so Google Analytics can show which campaign each visitor came from.

- [ ] **Tracking has been tested recently.** Someone has made a test purchase or enquiry since the last website change and checked it was recorded once.

2. Budget and spend

- [ ] **Budgets last all day.** Campaigns aren't running out of budget early and missing customers later in the day.
- [ ] **Spend is steady through the month.** You're not underspending for weeks and then rushing to use the budget at the end.
- [ ] **Money follows results.** Budget is moved towards the campaigns that bring in real sales, not the ones with the most clicks.
- [ ] **Locations are checked.** You know which areas bring in customers, and you aren't paying for regions you don't serve.
- [ ] **Days and times are checked.** You know when your ads work best, and you've adjusted if some hours or days never convert.
- [ ] **Phones and computers are compared.** You've checked whether mobile, desktop and tablet perform differently, and acted on it.
- [ ] **Each campaign has a target.** You know what an acceptable cost per sale or lead is, and you check each campaign against it.

3. Google Ads

- [ ] **Campaigns are organised sensibly.** They're grouped by product, service or goal, with searches for your brand name kept separate from everything else.
- [ ] **Search terms are reviewed regularly.** Someone looks at what people actually typed before clicking your ads, at least every couple of weeks.
- [ ] **Irrelevant searches are blocked.** You have a list of negative keywords for searches you never want to pay for, such as jobs, free, DIY or the wrong products.
- [ ] **Broad keywords are kept in check.** If you use broad match, it's backed by good tracking and negative keywords, so it doesn't drift into unrelated searches.
- [ ] **Partner and display sites are deliberate.** Your search campaigns only show on search partner websites or the Display Network if you've chosen that on purpose.
- [ ] **You know why you're missing out.** You've checked how often your ads don't show, and whether that's because of budget or because of ad quality and bids.
- [ ] **Your brand is protected.** You know whether competitors are bidding on your business name, and you've decided how to respond.
- [ ] **You know who you're up against.** You've looked at which competitors appear alongside you, and how often they rank above you.
- [ ] **Ads use all their space.** Search ads have plenty of headline and description options, plus extras like sitelinks, callouts and your phone number.

- [ ] **Performance Max has good material.** If you use Performance Max, it has a strong mix of images, videos and text, and you check where its ads appear.
- [ ] **Ads are tested.** You're regularly trying new ad wording against the old and keeping the winner.

4. Facebook and Instagram

- [ ] **The basics are set up.** Your business and website domain are verified, and the right people have access to the ad account.
- [ ] **The pixel works.** The Meta pixel is installed and recording the right events. Ideally the Conversions API is also sending events from your website's server.
- [ ] **Campaign goals match your business goals.** You're asking Meta for sales or leads if that's what you want, not just clicks or reach.
- [ ] **New and returning people are treated differently.** Campaigns that find new customers are separate from ones that bring back website visitors and past customers.
- [ ] **Existing customers are excluded where it makes sense.** You're not paying to show "first order" offers to people who've already bought.
- [ ] **Audiences are built on your best customers.** Lookalike audiences come from purchasers or high-value customers, not just everyone who visited.
- [ ] **Audiences don't compete.** Your ad sets aren't all chasing the same people, which pushes up your own costs.
- [ ] **Creative is varied.** You're using a mix of videos, images, carousels and Reels, in the right shapes for feeds and stories.
- [ ] **Videos get to the point.** The first few seconds show what you offer, and every ad has a clear call to action.
- [ ] **Creative is refreshed.** You watch how often the same people see each ad and replace ads before results drop off.
- [ ] **Ads meet the rules.** There are no rejected ads or account restrictions, and special categories like housing, employment or credit are declared where they apply.

5. LinkedIn

- [ ] **The Insight Tag is installed** on your website and conversions are being tracked.
- [ ] **The right objective is chosen.** For example, Lead Generation when you want leads, rather than Website Visits.
- [ ] **Job levels are checked.** Your ads aren't showing to entry-level, training or unpaid roles if you sell to decision-makers.
- [ ] **Job titles are checked.** You've reviewed the demographics report for job titles and companies that will never buy from you.
- [ ] **The wrong people are excluded,** such as your own staff, competitors' staff and existing customers.

- [ ] **Audience expansion and the Audience Network are deliberate.** Both are off unless you've tested them and they work for you.
- [ ] **Your own lists are used.** You've uploaded customer or prospect lists to target or exclude, and you retarget website visitors.
- [ ] **Each campaign has several ads** that rotate, written for the people it targets, and refreshed every month or two.

6. Landing pages

- [ ] **The page matches the ad.** People land on a page about what the ad promised, not your homepage.
- [ ] **It's fast and works on phones.** The page loads quickly and is easy to use on a small screen. Google's free PageSpeed Insights tool will tell you.
- [ ] **The next step is obvious.** The main button or form can be seen without scrolling and says clearly what happens next.
- [ ] **Forms are short.** You only ask for what you need, and you know where people give up.

7. Testing and review

- [ ] **You test one thing at a time,** so you know what made the difference.
- [ ] **Results are written down** and acted on, so you don't repeat old tests.
- [ ] **Poor performers are paused promptly,** and the budget is moved to what works.
- [ ] **Someone reviews the accounts weekly,** even if it's only for 30 minutes.

Your score

Count your ticks out of the items that apply to the platforms you use.

- **85% or more:** A well-run account. A fresh pair of eyes may still find savings, but the basics are solid.
- **60% to 84%:** Good foundations with leaks. Fix the tracking gaps first, then work through the rest.
- **Under 60%:** It's very likely you're paying for results you can't see, or for clicks that never turn into customers.

Turn the gaps into a plan

1. **Fix tracking first.** Until conversions are counted correctly, you can't tell what's working.
2. **Stop the obvious waste.** Block irrelevant searches, exclude the wrong locations and audiences, and pause ads that never convert.
3. **Move money to what works,** using your own sales figures, not just what the platforms report.
4. **Then improve ads and landing pages,** testing one change at a time.

Want us to check it for you?

Our Ads & Analytics Audit goes through all of this and more, checks what your ad platforms report against your real sales, and gives you a list of fixes in order of what they're costing you. Not ready for that? Take the free ads self-assessment first.

This guide is general information, not professional advice for your situation. Read it online and find more free guides at www.blend-datastrategy.com/tools.