

First Glimpse into Google's super secret Search Max

Are traditional match-types too complex and restricting for today's Search ecosystem?



01.24.2025

POV BY MIKE MORRIS, VP, PAID SEARCH &
MATHEW YOUNG, ASSOCIATE DIRECTOR, PAID SEARCH

1 WHAT'S HAPPENING?

Some advertisers dove into their Google Ad accounts yesterday to discover a new keyword match-type, the long-rumored Search Max. This new feature is not available to everyone yet, in fact Google has yet to make an official announcement.

2 WHAT'S IT MEAN?

As with Performance Max (a seemingly deliberate naming adjacency), Google expands its machine learning footprint; only this time, instead of a new campaign type, the update comes in the form of a new keyword type. Traditionally, keyword match-types allow advertisers to show ads based on the words users are searching. Rather than trying to match search queries perfectly to keywords, Search Max leans on the interests, intents, and behaviors of the person completing the search.

3 HOW WILL THIS AFFECT ADVERTISERS?

Advertisers may be hesitant to test Search Max, as it will mean relinquishing more control to Google's AI. Search Max will also be designed to cannibalize the traffic for all other match-types such as Exact Phrase and Broad Match, meaning this new tactic will be an all-or-nothing play.

Search Max keywords will likely serve more ads for searches that might not seem as 'on the nose' relevant. However, this should come paired with better performance if the audience seeing the ads is a better fit. This new step toward machine learning, will leave advertisers using old school tactics left in the dust.

4 WHAT'S THE BIGGER PICTURE?

This could be *the* single match-type solution for Google Ads in the future. If Search Max can effectively increase both reach and performance compared to other match-types, what other options do we really need? This aligns with Google's quest to simplify account management. So, what could possibly derail the Search Max train? Adoption.

Google's long play is all about delivering more ads in vacant inventory placements to put more dollars in their own pocket. This is almost certainly the true motivator behind its high priority on reach.

5 WHAT'S OUR READ?

Sources:

[SEL](#)

[SER](#)

Super caveat here – Google hasn't rolled this out officially. In fact we might have seen a sneak preview of something they decide to sit on (we've seen it happen before). However, when Google is about to announce a new match-type, which it hasn't done since 2010, it better be good.

This is the seismic shift Google has been planning for some time: use its innovation in machine learning for a single match-type to be all-encompassing in reach and performance. Meanwhile, eliminate the other match-types for simplification of management within Search. Start preparing and be ready to jump all over this when it becomes official.



THE ACRONYM CRYSTAL BALL

On a scale from 1 (just wait) to 10 (too late), how fast should you move on this?