WeAdU · Field Guide

Google Ads Best Practices for **Multi-Brand** Resellers

2014 Edition

The year every reseller was moved onto Shopping campaigns, Google published its own structure guide, and the feed rules tightened – what to have built.

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1. Everyone upgrades: Shopping campaigns become the **default**

Shopping campaigns opened to all advertisers globally on February 18, 2014. On July 15, Google said 85% of Product Listing Ads advertisers had already moved; on August 11 it released a one-click upgrade tool – which did not work for campaigns that used the old *adwords_labels* or *adwords_grouping* attributes – and on August 21 it set the end: "Starting September 2nd, you will not be able to edit your product targeting, max. CPC bids, promotional text and destination URLs anymore." Remaining campaigns were upgraded automatically through September. For a reseller with a labelled, brand-by-brand feed, the upgrade was a rewrite of the feed as much as of the account.

- Rewrite the feed before touching the campaigns: move margin tier, promotion status and season out of *adwords_labels* and into *custom_label_0* to *custom_label_4*, one meaning per label, the same meaning in every brand.
- Rebuild the structure deliberately rather than with the upgrade tool: one Shopping campaign per brand tier, product groups subdivided by brand and then by custom label, so that every bid has a reason.
- Keep a low-priority catch-all campaign at the lowest bid, and nothing else in "Everything else" groups that you did not intend to bid on.

2. Google's own structure **guide** – read for a multi-brand catalogue

On June 20, 2014, Google published "Shape Up Your Shopping Campaigns", a new AdWords best-practices guide. Its advice was written for any retailer, but it reads like a reseller's playbook: "Focus on product lines, profit margins and best sellers. It will help you budget and bid effectively for your top products." The guide recommended custom labels to group products that share a theme – bestsellers, seasonal products,

promotions or profit margins. "Set up separate campaigns for seasonal items like beach umbrellas, Halloween costumes or snow shovels." "Campaign priorities are a good way to support time-sensitive sales without having to restructure your entire campaign."

- "Product lines" means brands in a reseller's account: subdivide by brand first, because margin, supplier terms and trademark permissions change at the brand boundary, not the category boundary.
- Put "profit margins" in a custom label and bid on the label, not on revenue – a thin-margin brand needs a higher return at the same bid.
- Give seasonal brands their own campaigns and budgets, as the guide says for seasonal items, so a garden brand's spring does not starve a heating brand's autumn.
- Use priorities for a promotion, not for a permanent hierarchy: a high-priority campaign that holds this month's promoted models across brands, switched off when the promotion ends.

3. The feed rules of 2014: identifiers, mobile links, image **quality**

Two feed announcements shaped the year. On March 7, 2014, Google began disapproving items that lacked the required brand, GTIN or MPN, rejecting invalid GTINs, and demoting products where *identifier_exists* had been set to "false" for goods that do have identifiers – because, in Google's words, "unique product identifiers help us create one listing for a product with its various sellers." On June 19, Google published the 2014 update to the feed specification, enforced from September 30, 2014: a separate *mobile_link* for mobile landing pages, merchant-defined bundles flagged as such, new apparel attributes, simplified availability values, character limits per attribute, revised image-quality rules and a new landing-page policy. Automatic item updates, which read price and availability from a page's structured data, arrived on September 30 as well.

- Never use *identifier_exists* as a shortcut for a supplier who has not sent you GTINs: the demotion hit the whole product, and the reseller's offer dropped out of the one listing shoppers saw.
- Submit *mobile_link* for every brand's products if the mobile site had different URLs; a desktop page served to a phone was now a policy problem, not only a conversion problem.
- Turn on automatic item updates as a safety net for price mismatches, then fix the feed schedule so the net is rarely needed; a promotion that changes a brand's prices at midnight needs a feed that changes with it.

4. Close variants for all, and ads that write themselves per **brand**

On August 14, 2014, Google announced that from late September every exact and phrase match keyword would match close variants – misspellings, plurals, stemmings, accents and abbreviations – with no opt-out, citing an average 7% more clicks for those match types. The same season brought three text-ad tools that a multi-brand account could use at scale: dynamic sitelinks (July 24), callout extensions (September 3) and ad customizers (September 25), which insert values such as a price, a countdown or a brand name from a spreadsheet into the ad at serving time.

- Accept the variants and manage them with negatives: the exact-match brand keyword of one campaign now matched its plural and its misspellings, so the cross-brand negative lists (each brand's terms excluded from every other brand's campaign) became the real control.
- Use ad customizers for what changes by brand and by date – a manufacturer promotion's end date, a starting price – from one feed of values rather than hundreds of hand-written ads.

- Give every brand campaign its callouts on delivery, returns and authorized-reseller status; since Ad Rank began counting extensions in October 2013, an ad without them lost position at the same bid.

5. Trust and local signals: product ratings, promotions, store **inventory**

On July 29, 2014, five-star product ratings with review counts appeared on Product Listing Ads in the US, for merchants sharing all their reviews directly or through an approved aggregator. On September 23, local inventory ads, piloted with US retailers since October 2013, expanded to the United Kingdom, France, Germany, Japan and Australia and to desktop. On November 19, Merchant Promotions opened in the UK, Germany, France, Australia and India; Google's launch case reported a 7% higher click-through rate, 2% higher conversion rate and 11% lower cost per click than standard ads. On December 18, store visits joined Estimated Total Conversions.

- Product ratings belong to the product, not the store: the same brand's model shows the same stars on every reseller's tile, so the differentiator on the tile is price, promotion and seller rating.
- Push manufacturer-funded promotions through Merchant Promotions so they show on the tile itself, and keep the co-op paperwork (invoice, ad copy, landing page) as you go.
- If you have stores, submit local inventory for the brands whose buyers want to see the product first; a brand that sells online only does not need the local feed.

6. Reporting finally reaches Shopping: impression share and auction **insights**

Shopping campaigns had launched with benchmark click-through rate and benchmark maximum cost-per-click columns; the bid simulator followed on April 2, 2014, and on November 19, 2014 Google added auction insights for Shopping, a revamped search impression share with the share lost to budget and to rank, device and time-of-day segmentation, bid-simulator columns and a flat view of product groups across campaigns. The same day, Merchant Center's Diagnostics tab replaced the old Data Quality view. For a reseller, the point of all of it is the same: these numbers exist per product group, and product groups are brands.

- Read impression share lost to budget per brand campaign: a brand cut off at 3 p.m. every day is a brand whose budget, not whose bid, is the problem.
- Read impression share lost to rank against the benchmark maximum cost-per-click for the same brand: it tells you whether the auction is winnable at your margin, or whether the brand belongs in the catch-all.
- Use auction insights per brand to see whether the manufacturer itself is in the auction; the brand's own presence changes what a reseller can win.

7. Enhanced Ecommerce: brand-level **profit** becomes measurable

Google announced Enhanced Ecommerce for Google Analytics at its summit on May 28, 2014, with shopping and checkout funnels, product performance and refund reporting – and, crucially for a reseller, product data dimensions including brand. On October 1, 2014, dynamic remarketing, previously retail-only, opened to all verticals; retailers had had it since June 2013.

- Send brand, category and variant with every product view and purchase, so that the brand-level revenue and refund rates in Analytics match the brand-level campaigns in AdWords.

- Measure refunds per brand: a brand with a high return rate has a lower real margin than its price list suggests, and its Shopping bids should reflect it.

8. What was **new** in 2014 – and what each thing turned into

Ten dated changes from the year, in order, each with what it became:

- **February 18 – Shopping campaigns for all advertisers.** The structure that became Performance Max listing groups.
- **March 5 and April 2 – AdWords API support, multiple ad groups per Shopping campaign, bid simulator.** Bulk and offline management of a brand-by-brand structure; AdWords Editor support followed on July 15.
- **March 26 – Bing Product Ads open to all US advertisers.** A second product-feed channel; the feed built for Google could be reused.
- **July 29 – product ratings on Product Listing Ads (US).**
- **August 5 – Merchant Center shipping configuration tool.** Shipping settings are now a listing requirement, not an option.
- **September 9 – Product Listing Ads on search partners' retail sites.** Controlled by the campaign's search-partner setting, then as now.
- **September 30 – automatic item updates.**
- **November 19 – Shopping auction insights and impression share; Merchant Promotions in five more countries; Merchant Center Diagnostics.** The reporting layer every reseller works from.
- **November 24 – local inventory ads on tablets; Google reports shopping searches from smartphones up 3.5 times year on year.** Phones became the majority of Shopping clicks within a few years.
- **December 18 – store visits in Estimated Total Conversions.** Store visits and store sales are now Smart Bidding goals.

9. What the numbers showed: half of non-brand **clicks**

RKG's Digital Marketing Report for the first quarter of 2014 put Product Listing Ads at 29% of its retail clients' Google paid search clicks and half of their non-brand clicks, with a return on investment 14% better than text ads; Product Listing Ads and Bing Product Ads together had clicks up 51% and spend up 69% year on year. By the second quarter, Product Listing Ads were 26% of Google search clicks and 50% of non-brand clicks, and spend on Product Listing Ads and Bing Product Ads together had grown 72% against 6% for text ads. The fourth quarter closed with Shopping clicks up 51% and spend up 45% year on year.

- Half of your non-brand demand now arrived through a tile whose text you did not write: the feed title and image were the ad. Write titles as shoppers search – brand, model, key attribute – brand by brand.
- Measure text ads and Shopping ads against each other per brand, and move the budget; a 14% return advantage on average hides brands where the tile never wins.
- Plan for spend growth to outrun click growth: the auction was filling, and costs per click for Product Listing Ads had already passed non-brand text ads in late 2013.

10. Europe: a settlement accepted, then **abandoned**

On February 5, 2014, the European Commission announced that it had obtained from Google a "comparable display" of specialised-search rivals – three rivals shown alongside Google's own shopping results, chosen by auction – and would accept the commitments in principle. In September, after new complaints, Commissioner Almunia told the European Parliament that Google would have to improve its offer or face formal charges; Margrethe Vestager took office on November 1, 2014, and the settlement never closed. For a European reseller, the year passed with no change to the Shopping auction they were buying into – but the "rivals shown by auction" idea had now been written down twice.

- Nothing to change in the account in 2014. The thing to have watched was that every proposed remedy involved comparison-shopping services appearing inside Google's results.

11. A five-minute **check**

CHECK	WHY IT MATTERS
Feed rewritten: margin tier, promotion, season in custom_label_0 to 4; adwords_labels retired	The upgrade tool did not carry old labels over
One Shopping campaign per brand tier; product groups by brand, then by custom label	Google's guide: product lines, profit margins, best sellers
Seasonal brands in their own campaigns and budgets; promotions in a high-priority campaign	Priorities support time-sensitive sales without restructuring
No identifier_exists = false on products that have identifiers; GTINs valid	Demotion and disapproval from March 7
mobile_link, bundles, image quality and character limits compliant before September 30	The 2014 feed specification deadline
Cross-brand negative lists in place before close variants became mandatory	Late September: no opt-out any more
Impression share lost to budget and to rank read per brand	Budget problems and auction problems need different fixes
Brand sent as a product dimension in Enhanced Ecommerce; refunds measured per brand	Real margin per brand, not list margin

About **WeAdU**

WeAdU is a Google Premier Partner and the current home of a Google Ads practice founded in 2002, focused on AI-boosted Google Ads for brand product resellers.

Across the client book: **$241M+** in sales generated, **$132M+** tracked in Google Ads, **$32M+** in ad spend managed and **5.3M+** conversions. **14 of 20** clients (**70%**) saw a higher ROAS, measured over 12 months.

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ABOUT THIS EDITION

This edition is a retrospective written in September 2026, not a document from 2014: it describes Google AdWords, Product Listing Ads, Google Shopping and Merchant Center as they worked that year, checked against sources published at the time or reliable later accounts, listed below.

Sources & further reading

Google, Inside AdWords / Google Commerce blog: "Shopping campaigns available globally" (February 18, 2014); Shopping campaigns and the AdWords API (March 5, 2014); "Enforcement of Google Shopping unique product identifiers" (March 7, 2014); "What's next for Shopping campaigns and retailers" – ad groups, bid simulator (April 2, 2014); "Better data, better decisions: Enhanced Ecommerce" (Google Analytics blog, May 28 and 30, 2014); "2014 update to Google Shopping Products Feed Specification" (June 19, 2014); "Win the digital shelf with our new guide to Shopping campaigns" and the guide "Shape Up Your Shopping Campaigns" (June 20, 2014); "Scale your Shopping campaigns with bulk uploads and AdWords Editor" (July 15, 2014); "Introducing dynamic sitelinks" (July 24, 2014); "Helping shoppers decide with product ratings" (July 29, 2014); new shipping configuration tool (August 5, 2014); "New Shopping campaigns upgrade tool" (August 11, 2014); "Close variant matching for all exact and phrase match keywords" (August 14, 2014); "Are your Product Listing Ads ready for August 31st?" (August 21, 2014); "Call out what matters most to your customers" (September 3, 2014); "Extend Product Listing Ads to qualified shoppers on search partner sites" (September 9, 2014); "Local inventory ads expand to more countries" (September 23, 2014); "Customized creatives at scale" – ad customizers (September 25, 2014); "Keep price and availability fresh with automatic item updates" (September 30, 2014); "Dynamic remarketing now available to all advertisers" (October 1, 2014); "New ways to rev up your Shopping campaigns" and "Troubleshooting made easier with the new Diagnostics tab" (November 19, 2014); "Show promotions on your Product Listing Ads in more countries" (November 19, 2014); "Richer mobile shopping" (November 24, 2014); "Measure more: improving Estimated Total Conversions" (December 18, 2014); product ratings in the UK, France and Germany (March 26, 2015); "Improving Ad Rank" (October 22, 2013). Independent: Search Engine Land – sunset of regular Product Listing Ads campaigns (April 2014), Merchant Promotions in more countries (November 2014), Merkle report on Shopping ads' share of clicks (2018); Search Engine Watch – Product Listing Ads campaigns retired (April 2, 2014); RKG Digital Marketing Reports Q4 2013 (January 15, 2014), Q1 2014 (April 15, 2014) and Q2 2014 (July 2014); PPC Hero – RKG Q4 2014 figures (February 11, 2015); GoDataFeed – Bing Product Ads (March 27, 2014); European Commission press release IP/14/116 (February 5, 2014); AFP via Phys.org – Almunia at the European Parliament (September 23, 2014); European Commission press release IP/15/4780 (April 15, 2015). Policies and product names have changed since 2014; the 2026 edition describes the current rules.