



VIEWPOINT

Q WILL GOOGLE INSTANT AFFECT MY PAY-PER-CLICK (PPC) ADVERTISING?

A Yes—instantly. Well, maybe not that fast, but Google Instant has dramatically and instantaneously changed the search landscape and the way people experience search online. As a result, marketers will need to take a close look at their paid search strategies and make some changes—both interim and long-term.

Although Google Instant has only been launched in select markets*, we can assume that it will be rolled out across the global Google network in the near future.

Google Instant has, within days of launch, prompted users to find what they are looking for much more quickly. That makes sense. With Google Instant, results change on the fly as new characters and words are entered into a search query. Ultimately, this will affect the number of long-tail searches performed by users, as they will find their needed results before completing the search string just by entering a few keywords or letters.

A SAMPLE SEARCH SCENARIO

Word order will also become more important, as the first word entered will dictate which results are shown first. For example, users who type “Barcelona” as their first word of the search phrase, “Barcelona hotel,” may be initially perceived as looking for any information related to Barcelona. In contrast, users who enter “hotel” as the first part of the search query, “hotel Barcelona,” have specified that they are specifically interested in a hotel first. At this point, it is important to consider that Google serves ads based on the searcher’s location and will give priority to local results—meaning it may be time to allocate some budget to local search, directory listings, and other location-based services.



Google Instant favors plural forms of words, as it immediately suggests the plural form if the singular is entered.

TIP: It is imperative that plural forms be included in PPC keyword lists.

While in the past, results for the keywords, “Barcelona hotel” and “hotel Barcelona,” would have been very similar, Google Instant will provide a very different array of listings as the two search terms are entered.

TIP: PPC keyword lists need to reflect this by ensuring that both variations of a keyword/phrase are included.

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We expect to see the following changes in performance metrics:

1. There are two instances that will count as an impression: first, when an ad is shown and the user has paused for more than three seconds, and second, when a user takes an action after entering a search term (e.g., clicks on a page element, presses enter). This could potentially drive impressions up for short-tail keywords.
2. Click-through rate for long-tail keywords can be expected to increase, as only those searchers who have not found what they are looking for in the suggestions made by Google Instant will enter specific terms. “Exact” and “Phrase” match types will likely become less important, as users will no longer need to enter a complete search term before search listings begin to appear.

Many users prefer to leverage the search box in the Google toolbar and will not be affected at all by Google Instant. However, with most online users starting their browsing sessions on Google.com, Google Instant is a factor that must be instantly comprehended and included in any paid search strategy.

**Google Instant has been launched in the US, UK, France, Germany, Italy, Spain and Russia, on the following browsers: Chrome v5/6, Firefox v3, Safari v5 for Mac and Internet Explorer v8. Please note, users on domains other than Google.com can only access Google Instant if signed in to a Google account. Google is a registered trademark of Google Inc.*

IMPACT ON YOUR BUDGET

Bottom line, marketers now have the opportunity to expand their keywords, listings, and descriptions, in order to reach the highest quality—and quantity—of their target markets. As a result, PPC budgets may increase in the short term as marketers increase keywords to account for the new search technology. However, as searchers become more comfortable with the instant results, behaviors may standardize and allow for some streamlining of terms. Therefore, we expect search term lists to increase, along with budgets, in the immediate term and later, level off.

Google Instant will have an immediate and significant impact on PPC strategy. It is important to understand this impact and adjust keywords and organic search content to optimize the results for your hotel so you capture searchers as early as possible in the search input process.

Jean Mascré, TRAVELCLICK's Online Marketing Manager for the company's Digital Agency paid search and email marketing solutions, serves as both product consultant on the sales side and product expert on the client side. Jean is ultimately responsible for driving hotel bookings using paid keyword advertising across Google, Yahoo!, and other popular search engines for thousands of hotels and resorts worldwide. Jean joined TRAVELCLICK from Group M, a Madrid division of WPP, where he was a paid search specialist and UK search team leader.

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