

CIO Review

SEPTEMBER 9 · 2015 CIOREVIEW.COM



IN MY OPINION
Embracing Hybrid Cloud
with AWS
Joe Fuller, VP/CIO,
Dominion Enterprises

**C2S Consulting Group:
Leading Migration
to the Cloud**

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CIO REVIEW
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Of all the digital marketing avenues available to the modern retailer, paid search provides opportunity for scalable, ROI-driven campaigns like few others. At first, the concept of paid search advertising was experimental, with Google pioneering the cost per click model with its text-only AdWords platform. Now, as the technology grows more sophisticated and the competition for the top slots grows fiercer, paid search is rapidly expanding to include categories like social media advertising and comparison shopping engines.

One of the biggest trends to rise from this expansion is the rapid growth of product ads. These ads traditionally display a product image, price, and sometimes additional information (such as a promotional code or offer) right at the top of the search engine results page. And as of the close of Q1 2015, click growth from product ads exceeded 19percent in Google and 25percent in Bing, while text ads grew only 2percent across both platforms, based on industry research by Merkle.

Product ads are currently some of the hottest online real estate for digital marketers, and everyone is scrambling to establish a strong presence on popular platforms like Google Shopping, Bing Ads, and Shopping.com before all the low hanging fruit is taken.

However, what many companies either fail to realize or fail to act upon is the fact that product ads, unlike their text-only counterparts, depend on the retailer's product feed for success. This product feed is a reflection of a site's product database, and provides specific product information which the search engine then uses to determine a product's eligibility for display.

While oversight of the paid search program has traditionally fallen to the CMO, product ads require a lot more cooperation between departments in order to pull off a successful campaign.

In our experience, no amount of management strategy can compensate for a sub-par feed. The key to successful product ad campaigns lies in the product feed itself—a special spreadsheet of product data that is regularly uploaded to the comparison shopping engine. This feed then depends on your e-commerce product database to provide relevant, up-to-date, and valuable information that will attract customers on the front end. While there's a lot of details that go into developing a robust product feed, there are three key steps you'll want to follow as you delve into the world of feed-driven digital marketing.

1. The first thing to do is start the conversation. Depending on the size of your e-commerce company, this will vary in difficulty. But it's very important that, if your CMO wants to manage paid search campaigns on product ad platforms or

comparison shopping engines, you sit down with him or her and clearly communicate the interdepartmental resources and challenges required for this project—and listen to the challenges the marketing team has on their end. This will save everyone a lot of time and headaches.

2. You'll also want to set up an infrastructure that allows for a two-way flow of information. Whether you're managing paid search in house or with an agency, your analyst will need data updates from you in order to reflect important changes, such as sale pricing or out of stock notifications. Some companies are able to automate this to some extent, others aren't. Find a solution that works for you.

3. Lastly, a good place to get hands-on in the process of optimizing your product feed is with "optional" attributes. This is where you have the most opportunity to support your digital marketing team by using extra database information to enhance your product feed. To get you started, here are some of our favorite "optional" attributes that we highly recommend incorporating into your own feed:

- Include the global trade item number (GTIN), brand and manufacturer part number (MPN) in your feed—even though most feeds only require two of these three. This enables search engines like Google Shopping to better cluster and compare products—which is very useful for businesses that are competitively priced or offer benefits like free shipping or no sales tax.

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- Include attributes like size, color, material, age, gender, and pattern wherever applicable. Many search engines allow shoppers to filter by these attributes—and feeds that haven't taken the time to include this information run a high risk of being left out or pushed to the bottom of the results page.



Mark Digman

- If you have multiple images of your products, be sure to always include them. This is highly attractive to shoppers and search engine crawlers alike.

- Customize your feed data by including manufacturer's suggested retail price (MSRP) (available for Google, Bing, Shopzilla, Nextag, and the eBay Commerce Network). Put MSRP price into your "Price" column and your retail price in a "Sale Price" column and your ad will be highlighted like a sale ad.

- Ask your marketing team to provide you with custom labels for particular product categories or groups—this will enable your paid search team to better segregate campaigns and tailor bids based on value attributes like margin, sale, or seasonality.

If your company is trying to run profitable product ad or comparison shopping campaigns (on any platform), it will require collaboration between your development or IT team, and your marketing team. While every company will have to find a subdivision of tasks that works for them, the three steps above should help you get started on an initiative that combines the strengths of the CIO and CMO to benefit your company's bottom line. [CR](#)

The "IT" Factor for Powering Your Paid Search Investments

By Mark Digman, CMO, ROI Revolution

