FOR B2C MARKETING PROFESSIONALS

Brief: Capture Customers With Click-To-Call

by Collin Colburn and Shar VanBoskirk
February 16, 2016

Why Read This Brief

Your customers are increasingly demanding contextually relevant experiences in their moments of need. Click-to-call ads offer a way to provide personal engagement through the facility of paid search mechanics. This report makes the case for click-to-call and explains when and how to use it.

Key Takeaways

Customers Want To Talk
Consumers increasingly search for information via mobile devices. A phone call can be the best way to meet their needs immediately.

Click-To-Call Is Good For Branding And Direct Response
Click-to-call provides immediate gratification for on-the-go searchers. It fosters engagement out of otherwise superficial interactions with a brand.
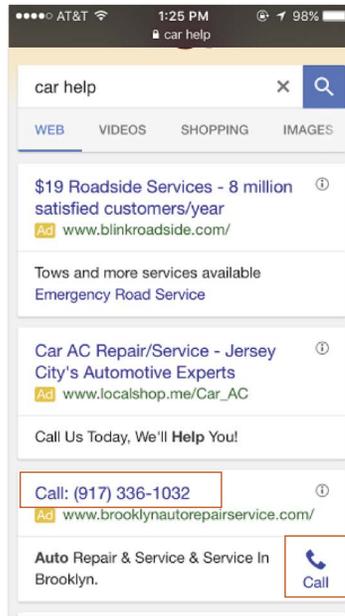
Brief: Capture Customers With Click-To-Call

by Collin Colburn and Shar VanBoskirk
with Wei-ming Egelman and Laura Glazer
February 16, 2016

Marketers: Your Customers Are On The Line

Click-to-call ads — ads delivered via mobile search, display, or social media that have a call-to-action to place a call — matter more to marketers now than in the past because:

›   **Mobile use propagates phone calls.** Go figure: The explosion of smartphone use for streaming music and tracking Tom Brady stats also enables people to make more phone calls. Mobile searches generated 30 billion calls to businesses in 2013, and will inspire 73 billion more by 2018.[1] And, even in the digital age, people still like talking to each other. Fifty-nine percent of US online adults say they have been satisfied with their phone conversations with customer service agents in the past 12 months.[2]

›   **New ad formats connect calls with a thumb click.** Online ads that used to just direct customers to landing pages can now initiate direct phone calls.[3] For example, Google's call-only ads enable users to call by clicking on a link in the ad text or a call button (see Figure 1). And Twitter and Facebook offer call extensions — a button to place a call — with their in-stream ads (see Figure 2).

›   **Other ad formats have grown cost prohibitive.** Competition for more established online media — like paid search — is pushing marketers to consider alternative ad formats, like click-to-call.[4] For example, Vivint, a smart home technology company, finds click-to-call less expensive and delivers more qualified leads than traditional paid search.

›   **New call-tracking tools deliver marketing insights.** Traditional call analytics systems — like Twilio and CallMiner — measured the number and duration of inbound calls to help call centers decrease customer service costs. New tools like Invoca and Marchex provide insight into caller motivation, semantic analysis, and call outcomes to help inform marketing messages, offers, and even pricing efforts. For example, a large satellite TV provider targeted offers in click-to-call ads to hot button issues identified in inbound questions such as "How much will it cost to bundle in HBO?"

FIGURE 1 Google's Call-Only Ad Gives Two Opportunities To Call

Source: Google website

FIGURE 2 Twitter Offers Ads With Click-To-Call Functionality

Source: Twitter website

Context Guides When To Use Click-To-Call

Click-to-call is more effective in some situations than others. The three following circumstances show that click-to-call is best used:

› **When mobile offers greater utility than desktop.** Customers on the go turn to mobile devices for information and support. In fact, Starwood Hotels saw 20% growth in mobile reservations from last-minute bookers using click-to-call.[5] And Red Roof Inn developed a click-to-call program targeted specifically at drivers stuck in traffic.

› **To create brand engagement through a direct response medium.** A call can deepen or facilitate a brand experience even if it comes from a search that isn't urgent or local in nature. For example, Mountain Dew used click-to-call ads on Twitter to generate sweepstake entries and gained a branding benefit: 78% of calls lasted longer than 30 seconds.[6] And cable provider Allconnect used click-to-call to help confused prospects better understand their TV and Internet packages.[7]

› **Instead of lousy (or nonexistent) mobile web experiences.** Click-to-call ads cut the landing page out of the search conversion process — a temporary fix for marketers who value search engine demand, but don't have a mobile-optimized site.[8] One hospital network found this encouraged the completion of simple tasks — like scheduling an appointment — that were getting derailed by its clunky mobile site.[9]

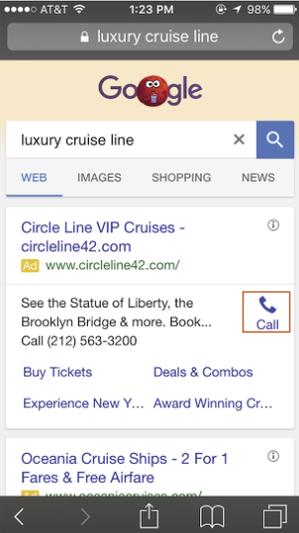### Use Google To Launch Click-To-Call

Google has the longest tenure with click-to-call and provides the greatest reach of all possible media outlets, so we recommend building your click-to-call foundation on it. Consider the following observations to get started.

› **Different ad types suit different goals.** Google offers two click-to-call ad types (see Figure 3). Call extension ads drive landing page visits and direct phone calls. Accor Hotels used call extension ads to maintain parity (by driving site traffic) and drive advantage (through direct phone calls) over competitors.[10] Call-only ads initiate calls but in multiple ways — through the ad text or a call button. A veterinary hospital used call-only ads to shortcut pet owners to its 24-hour emergency hotline and earned 144 qualified calls within the first two months.[11]

› **Context influences impression frequency.** Determine how often to fire your click-to-call ads with two inputs. First: When is your call center available? Set the hours and dates for click-to-call campaigns to be live based on call center operating hours. Additionally, consider when a user might value making a call. This means optimizing ads based on user context. For example, Red Roof Inn customized click-to-call ads to stranded travelers, based on flight cancellation data.[12] Google's mobile bid adjustment feature can help here, too. It automatically increases bids on selected keywords when it identifies that a searcher is on a mobile device within a target geolocation.[13]

› **Analysis decides the target keywords.** Of course keywords that indicate urgency or location are good bid targets for click-to-call ads. Building out your click-to-call keyword list with less obvious keywords may take some work. A few recommendations: Study your call center data for common queries. Do linguistic analysis of onsite search queries. Or, monitor competitor keyword selection with a competitive intelligence platform like Adgooroo or The Search Monitor. One online dental referral website conducted competitive keyword analysis and added long-tail terms, negative keywords, and geotargeted terms, which grew revenue by 248%.[14]

FIGURE 3 Google's Two Call Features Give Marketers Options

Ad type	What it is	Use case	Things to consider	Example
Call extension	An option to add on a call button to an existing paid search ad.	Best used to optimize an existing campaign or to give customers the option to click through to your site or call.	The call button is not guaranteed to display. E.g., — ads not in the No. 1 position will likely not have a call button.	
Call-only	A paid search ad specifically for calls. Ad copy will display a number and telephone button, both of which can be clicked on to place a call directly.	Best used if you want your customers to avoid your mobile site or if a call is more valuable than a customer navigating your site.	Call button is always guaranteed to display. There is no click-through to a web page from the ad.	

Source: Google

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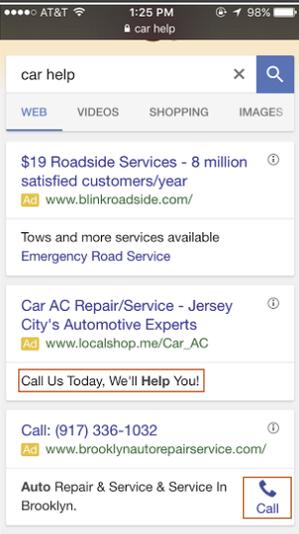
Prepare Your Call Center For A Burst Of New Leads

A click-to-call program is only good if you convert the inbound calls. We think you'll boost telephone lead volume by at least 10% with click-to-call.[15] So before you launch, make sure your call center can handle an influx of calls.

› **Staff to meet call demand.** Click-to-call campaigns will change the traffic patterns to your call center, forcing a change to open hours or even headcount. The best evidence that you need a staff shuffle is call volume and how quickly customers connect to an agent. Fifteen percent of callers hang up after waiting more than 40 seconds. So if that sounds like your situation, put in for some new hires.[16] Can't afford new call center agents? Amit Varia, product manager at DoubleClick, recommends load balancing. "Clients can get efficiencies out of their call centers by shifting staff away from times when call volume is low to periods of peak demand."

› **Train call agents on the customer life cycle.** Not every caller will be ready to buy. So a call center agent plays a critical function in migrating customers through their decision process toward purchase. Marketing leaders should take the lead on teaching call center reps how to identify different stages of the customer journey by listening for specific keywords like "Compared to" or "Replace," creating guidance for what to say in certain circumstances, or doing ride-alongs, where an agent and marketer shadow each other on calls. Progrexion, a consumer credit reputation manager, found that tailoring call center scripts to keywords used in its ad copy boosted mobile sales 221%.[17]

› **Use call centers data to inform marketing plans.** The tone, pace, or word choice used by a caller provides better evidence of their emotional state than digital behaviors can. And firms that can create an emotional connection with customers have an advantage.[18] One major bank used speech analytics to identify disgruntled callers and target particular offers and agents to them in order to get them to buy.[19]

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Supplemental Material

Survey Methodology

Forrester conducted the North American Consumer Technographics® Customer Life Cycle Survey 2, 2015 in July 2015 fielded of 4,485 US individuals ages 18 to 88. For results based on a randomly chosen sample of this size, there is 95% confidence that the results have a statistical precision of plus or minus 1.5% of what they would be if the entire population of US online adults (defined as those online weekly or more often) had been surveyed. Forrester weighted the data by age, gender, income, broadband adoption, and region to demographically represent the adult US online population. The survey sample size, when weighted, was 4,473. (Note: Weighted sample sizes can be different from the actual number of respondents to account for individuals generally underrepresented in online panels.) Please note that respondents who participate in online surveys generally have more experience with the Internet and feel more comfortable transacting online.

Endnotes

1 The report by BIA/Kelsey explores the increasingly sophisticated world of call monetization. Source: "Phone Calls: The New Currency of the Smartphone Era," BIA Kelsey (http://www.biakelsey.com/Research-and-Analysis/Coverage-Areas/Mobile/insight-report-phonecalls-smartphone-era.asp).

2 Source: Forrester's North American Consumer Technographics Customer Life Cycle Survey 2, 2015.

3 Google has recently added a call-only ad. Source: Kim, "AdWords New Call-Only Ads," Philly Marketing Labs, February 19, 2015 (http://www.phillymarketinglabs.com/adwords-new-call-only-ads/).

   Facebook and Twitter are both testing click-to-call functionality within their ads. Source: "Local awareness ads," Facebook for business (https://www.facebook.com/business/a/local-awareness-ads) and Suzanne Ackley, "Tweeting a Click to Call Button," BIA Kelsey, March 20, 2014 (http://blog.biakelsey.com/index.php/2014/03/20/tweeting-a-click-to-call-button/).

4 Marketing has changed. Your brand is now defined by the interactions that people have with it. See the "The Power Of Customer Context" Forrester report.

5 Starwood discovered that sending mobile searchers to call agents instead of the mobile website dramatically increased conversions. Source: Greg Sterling, "Case Studies: Optimizing For Mobile Can Drive More Conversions At Lower Cost Than On The PC," Marketing Land, June 21, 2012 (http://marketingland.com/case-studies-optimizing-for-mobile-can-drive-more-conversions-at-lower-cost-than-on-the-pc-14864).

6 Seventy-eight percent of the messages that were left to win the free soda were 30 seconds or longer. Source: Lauren Johnson, "Mountain Dew Gets 3,500 Phone Calls From Click-to-Call Tweet," AdWeek, July 29, 2014 (http://www.adweek.com/news/technology/mountain-dew-gets-3500-phone-calls-click-call-tweet-159188).

7 Source: Caitlyn Bohannon, "Allconnect Decreases Acquisition Costs By 43pc On Click-To-Call Ads," Mobile Marketer, February 6, 2015 (http://www.mobilemarketer.com/cms/news/advertising/19714.html).

8 Google has said for years that mobile-friendly is not optional. See the "Marketers Beware: Google's Mobile-Friendly Search Will Bury Your Mobile-Unfriendly Sites" Forrester report.

9 Source: Ben Lloyd, "New Case Study! How We Increased Call Volume by 254% with PPC," Add3, April 3, 2013 (http://www.add3.com/insights/sem-adwords/how-we-grew-mobile-ppc-performance/).

10 Accor Hotels leveraged many of Google's ad extensions to increase leads. Source: "Accor Hotels Uses Google Ad Extensions to Increase Incremental Conversions by 14%," Think with Google, July 2014 (https://www.thinkwithgoogle.com/case-studies/accor-hotels-uses-google-ad-extensions-to-increase-incremental-conversions.html).

11 Source: Tyler McDanel, "Using Call Only Ads for Veterinary Emergencies," Beyond Indigo Pets, October 6, 2015 (http://www.beyondindigopets.com/blog/using-call-only-ads-for-veterinary-emergencies/).

12 Red Roof Inn knew that the moment a flight gets cancelled, people will be looking for a hotel. See the "Transition From Search To Discovery Marketing" Forrester report.

13 For more information on bid adjustments, see Google's summary. Source: "About bid adjustments," Google (https://support.google.com/adwords/answer/2732132?hl=en).

14 Source: "Click-to-Call Paid Search Case Study: Online Dentist Referral," The Search Agency (http://www.thesearchagency.com/sites/default/files/Click-to-Call%20Paid%20Search%20Case%20Study-%20Online%20Dentist%20Referral.pdf).

15 We conducted several interviews for this research, where we found that most marketers saw at least 10% growth in call volume from click-to-call.

[16] Fifteen percent of callers tend to hang up after 40 seconds of holding, and every second after that the drop off rate increases. Source: Olivia Cole, "The 56 Second Hold Time Bogey Average Customer Wait Times: A DialogTech Benchmarking Analysis (Part 2)," Dialog Tech, August 5, 2013 (http://www.dialogtech.com/blog/call-management/the-56-second-hold-time-bogey-average-customer-wait-times-an-ifbyphone-benchmarking-analysis-part-2).

[17] Progrexion was able to grow the mobile revenue with click-to-call and tailoring the call experience to customer expectations. Source: "Progrexion Uses Google Mobile Ads and Click to Call to Gain Larger Piece of Mobile Pie," Think With Google (https://www.thinkwithgoogle.com/intl/en-gb/case-study/mobile-sales-for-progrexion-grow-with-google-mobile-ads-and-click-to-call/).

[18] Firms that are able to influence customer's decisions and understand their emotions will have an advantage. See the "How People Choose" Forrester report and see the "Understanding The Impact Of Emotion On Customer Experience" Forrester report.

[19] This major bank taught its call agents what words to listen to and how to guide their customers through questions or problems. Source: Kveta Vostra, "Using Speech Analytics in Call Center Agent Training," Zoom International, September 2, 2015 (http://blog.zoomint.com/blog/using-speech-analytics-in-call-center-agent-training).

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