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# Guide for Serious

**ABOUT THIS DOCUMENT**

This guide is prepared by Hans Lacida (hanslacida.com), Paid Acquisition Systems Operator. Intended for internal use by clients, prospects, and US business owners evaluating Google Ads strategy. All frameworks reflect 2025-2026 Google Ads platform behavior. For questions or to book a free 15-min ROAS audit: [cal.com/hanslacida](https://cal.com/hanslacida)

**DISCLAIMER**

Results referenced in this document reflect real client engagements. Individual results vary based on vertical, budget, market conditions, and account history. This is not a guarantee of performance. All trademarks belong to their respective owners.

01 —

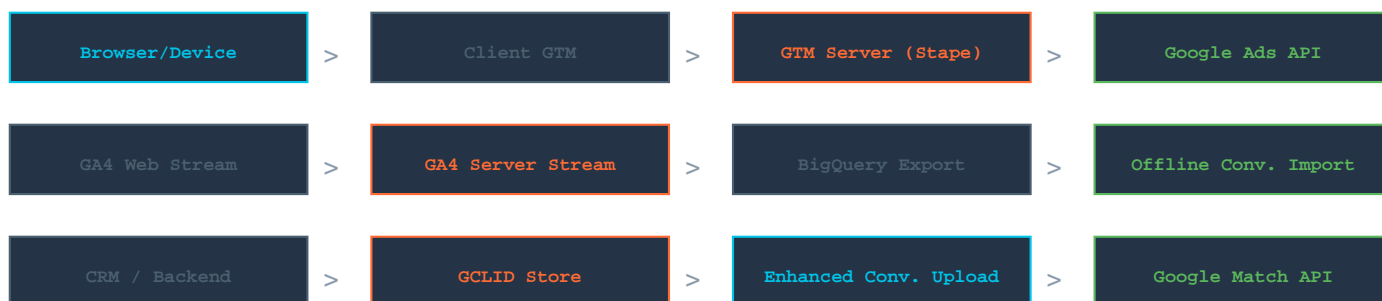
## Tracking Infrastructure & Measurement

# Measurement Architecture Before You Spend a Dollar

Most Google Ads campaigns fail before the first click is bought. The root cause: broken, incomplete, or misattributed conversion data. Google's AI bidding is only as smart as the signals you feed it. Garbage in, garbage out.

The modern tracking stack is no longer optional complexity — it is the foundation on which every bidding algorithm, audience signal, and optimization decision is built.

### SERVER-SIDE TRACKING ARCHITECTURE



## Why Client-Side Tracking Is Dying

ITP (Intelligent Tracking Prevention) on Safari/iOS reduces cookie lifespan to 1-7 days. Chrome third-party cookie deprecation has been rolling out in phases. Ad blockers block Google Tag (gtag.js) at rates of 15-35% depending on your audience. Relying solely on client-side tags means you are systematically underreporting conversions — and your bidding algorithms are operating blind.

### CLIENT-SIDE ONLY vs. SERVER-SIDE STACK

**The Broken Setup**

Google Ads tag on thank-you page only  
 GA4 via gtag.js in page head  
 No GCLID storage in CRM  
 No enhanced conversions configured  
 Conversion window: 30 days (unchecked)  
*Reported ROAS: 4.2x (actual: ~2.8x)*

**The Right Setup**

GTM SS container on first-party subdomain  
 Enhanced conversions with hashed PII  
 GCLID captured + stored server-side on every landing  
 Offline conversion import via Google Ads API  
 GA4 server stream + BigQuery for ML audience seeds  
 Consent Mode v2 with proper fallback modeling

## GCLID Auto-Tagging & Storage

Every click from Google Ads appends a gclid parameter to your landing URL. Most teams ignore it. Smart operators store it in their CRM on the lead/contact record, then upload qualified conversions back to Google Ads with actual revenue values.

**JAVASCRIPT — GCLID CAPTURE & PERSISTENCE**

```
// Capture GCLID from URL and persist to cookie + localStorage
const captureGCLID = () => {
  const params = new URLSearchParams(window.location.search);
  const gclid = params.get('gclid');
  const gclidSrc = params.get('gclidsrc');

  if (gclid && (!gclidSrc || gclidSrc === 'aw.ds')) {
    const expiry = new Date();
    expiry.setDate(expiry.getDate() + 90); // 90-day for long sales cycles
    document.cookie = `gclid=${gclid}; expires=${expiry.toUTCString()}; path=/`;
    localStorage.setItem('gclid', JSON.stringify({
      value: gclid, timestamp: Date.now(),
      utm_campaign: params.get("utm_campaign")
    }));
  }
};
```

**OPERATOR NOTE**

After capturing GCLID, attach it as a hidden field to every form. Pass it to your CRM. When a lead qualifies or a sale closes, upload that GCLID + revenue value via the Google Ads API Offline Conversion Import endpoint. This closes the loop completely.

## Consent Mode v2 — Required Compliance Layer

Consent Mode v2 is required for Google's advertising products in EU/EEA/UK markets. Non-compliance results in loss of audience signals and conversion modeling. Even for US-only businesses, behavioral modeling fills gaps when users show high intent but do not convert.

#### GTM — CONSENT MODE V2 DEFAULT + UPDATE PATTERN

```
// Default BEFORE any tags fire (in <head> or GTM init trigger)
gtag("consent", "default", {
  ad_storage:      "denied",
  analytics_storage: "denied",
  ad_user_data:    "denied", // NEW in v2
  ad_personalization: "denied", // NEW in v2
  wait_for_update: 2000
});

// Update AFTER CMP decision (OneTrust, Cookiebot, etc.)
function updateConsent(choices) {
  gtag("consent", "update", {
    ad_storage:      choices.marketing ? "granted" : "denied",
    analytics_storage: choices.analytics ? "granted" : "denied",
    ad_user_data:    choices.marketing ? "granted" : "denied",
    ad_personalization: choices.marketing ? "granted" : "denied"
  });
}
```

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# Performance Max Campaign Architecture

## Working With the Machine, Not Against It

Performance Max is the most misunderstood campaign type in Google Ads. Most operators either dump everything into one campaign (brand dilution, audience cannibalism) or run it with skeleton assets and wonder why it underperforms.

### OPERATOR PRINCIPLE

PMax is not a campaign. It is an AI bidding engine. Your job is to control what it can and cannot access, and to feed it the highest-quality signals possible.

The campaign structure is just the interface to that engine.

## Asset Group Architecture Framework

Each asset group is an audience x creative x product segment combination. Wrong groupings cause cross-contamination of signals, budget misallocation, and the algorithm optimizing for the wrong user intent.

Asset Group	Audience Signals	Creative Theme	Priority
Brand Remarketing	Site visitors 30d, Cart abandoners, CRM customers	Social proof, urgency, dynamic	HIGH
High-Intent Prospecting	Competitor URLs, Custom intent, Industry keywords	Problem-aware, comparison	MEDIUM
Lookalike Expansion	Customer Match seed > Similar, LTV segments	Brand awareness, category	LOW-MED
High-LTV Segment	Top 20% customer list, high-AOV purchasers	Loyalty, exclusivity, value	PREMIUM

## Brand Exclusion — Non-Negotiable

### CRITICAL WARNING

Without brand exclusions, PMax will cannibalize your branded search campaigns which convert at lower CPA than any prospecting campaign. It will inflate PMax ROAS, deceive your reporting, and make you think PMax is outperforming when it is just stealing bottom-of-funnel traffic that would have converted anyway.

## GOOGLE ADS SCRIPT — BRAND NEGATIVE SYNC TO ALL PMAx CAMPAIGNS

```

/**
 * Auto-syncs brand negative keyword list to all PMAx campaigns
 * Run daily via Google Ads Scripts scheduler
 */
function main() {
  const BRAND_LIST_NAME = '[Brand Negatives - PMAx]';
  const brandTerms = ['yourbrand', 'yourbrand.com', 'yourcompany'];

  let negList = getOrCreateNegList(BRAND_LIST_NAME, brandTerms);

  const campaigns = AdsApp.performanceMaxCampaigns().get();
  while (campaigns.hasNext()) {
    const campaign = campaigns.next();
    campaign.negativeKeywordLists().addList(negList);
    Logger.log(`Applied to: ${campaign.getName()}`);
  }
}

```

## PMAx Signal Hierarchy — What Actually Moves Performance

Tier	Signal Type	Strength	Implementation
Tier 1	Customer Match (email/phone hashed)	<b>STRONGEST</b>	Weekly CRM export + upload
Tier 1	Cart abandoners (7-14d window)	<b>STRONGEST</b>	GA4 remarketing list
Tier 2	Custom intent (competitor URLs)	<b>STRONG</b>	Manual URL list in audience builder
Tier 2	In-market segments (category)	<b>STRONG</b>	Google pre-built audiences
Tier 3	Affinity audiences	DIRECTIONAL	Use only as supplemental signal
Tier 3	Demographic overlays	DIRECTIONAL	Layer on top, do not rely on alone

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# Smart Bidding Signal Hierarchy & Ramp Protocol

## The Ramp Protocol — From Cold to Scaled

Smart bidding (tROAS, tCPA, Maximize Conversions) is a machine learning system. It requires a learning period, adequate data volume, and consistent signal quality. Switching directly to tROAS on a cold campaign is one of the most common budget-burning mistakes.

Phase	Bidding Strategy	Duration	Conv. Volume	Operator Action
Phase 0	Max Conversions (no CPA target)	2-3 weeks	0 → 20/mo	Build data. Do not touch.
Phase 1	tCPA set 25-40% above actual CPA	3-4 weeks	20-50/mo	Reduce target 5-10% every 7d
Phase 2	tROAS (ecom) or tCPA (leadgen)	Ongoing	50+/mo	Adjust ±15% per 7-day window
Phase 3	Profit-based tROAS (margin-adj. value)	When ready	100+/mo	Feed margin per product, not revenue

### OPERATOR NOTE

The 30-day "learning period" label in Google Ads UI is a simplification. The algorithm continues learning indefinitely. Do NOT make changes to budget (>20%), bid strategy, or campaign structure during the first 2-4 weeks of any strategy change. Every major change re-triggers a learning period and resets accumulated signal quality.

## How Google Calculates Your Bid

$$\text{Eligible Impressions} \times \text{Predicted P(Conversion)} \times \text{Conv. Value} = \text{BID}$$

This is how Google's Smart Bidding internally calculates your bid in every auction. Your job as an operator is to maximize the quality and completeness of conversion signal so that the predicted P(Conversion) is accurate, and to ensure conversion value reflects actual business value (profit, not just revenue).

## Portfolio Bid Strategies — Downside Protection

Portfolio bid strategies let you set shared budgets and bid constraints across multiple campaigns. For high-CPC verticals (legal, finance, home services), this is the primary mechanism for preventing runaway spend on any single campaign.

## GOOGLE ADS API — PORTFOLIO BID STRATEGY CONFIG

```
# Shared tROAS portfolio with CPC cap — Google Ads API config
portfolio_bidding_strategy = {
  "name": "[Portfolio] ecom-Q2-2026-tROAS",
  "target_roas": {
    "target_roas": 4.5, # 450% ROAS target
    "cpc_bid_ceiling_micros": 8000000, # $8.00 max CPC cap
    "cpc_bid_floor_micros": 500000, # $0.50 min CPC floor
  },
  "enhanced_cpc_enabled": False,
  "status": "ENABLED"
}
```

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## First-Party Data Strategy & Activation

### The New Targeting Moat

As third-party cookies die and privacy regulations expand, first-party data is no longer a nice-to-have. Brands with clean, segmented, activated first-party data will systematically outperform those without — regardless of budget size.

#### Customer Match — Technical Implementation

Customer Match uploads hashed customer data (email, phone, address) to Google, which matches it to signed-in Google accounts. When matched, these become the highest-quality audience signals available — above any interest or intent audience.

PYTHON — CUSTOMER MATCH UPLOAD WITH SHA-256 HASHING

```
import hashlib
import pandas as pd

def normalize_and_hash(value: str) -> str:
    """SHA-256 hash after normalization per Google specs"""
    normalized = value.strip().lower()
    return hashlib.sha256(normalized.encode("utf-8")).hexdigest()

def build_user_data_payload(df: pd.DataFrame) -> list:
    users = []
    for _, row in df.iterrows():
        user_identifier = {
            "hashed_email": normalize_and_hash(row["email"]),
            "hashed_phone_number": normalize_and_hash(row["phone"]),
            "address_info": {
                "hashed_first_name": normalize_and_hash(row["first_name"]),
                "hashed_last_name": normalize_and_hash(row["last_name"]),
                "country_code": "US", "postal_code": row["zip"]
            }
        }
        users.append(user_identifier)
    return users

# Run upload weekly for freshness. Segment by LTV, category, recency.
```

### Segmentation Framework for Customer Match

**Ecommerce Segments**

- High-LTV customers (top 20% by lifetime spend)
- Lapsed purchasers (90-365 days since last order)
- Category buyers (segmented by product line)
- Subscription / repeat purchase customers
- High-AOV single-purchasers (winback potential)
- New customer cohort 0-30 days (for suppression)

**Lead Gen Segments**

- Closed won deals (strongest positive signal)
- Qualified leads not yet closed (bid up)
- Closed lost deals (suppress or re-engage)
- Churned clients (reactivation campaign)
- MQL to SQL drop-offs (mid-funnel recovery)
- Referral sources (lookalike seed list)

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## Search Campaign Architecture — High-CPC Verticals

### Zero Margin for Structural Error

In high-CPC verticals (legal: \$50-\$300/click, finance: \$30-\$150/click, home services: \$20-\$80/click), every wasted click is expensive. The architecture must enforce tight thematic alignment: keyword intent to ad copy to landing page. No exceptions.

### Single Theme Ad Groups (STAGs) — Current Framework

Element	SKAG (Legacy)	STAG (Current Best Practice)
Keywords per group	1 (exact match only)	3-8 tightly themed (exact + phrase)
Management overhead	Extremely high	Manageable, proportional gain
RSA learning data	Insufficient per ad group	Adequate for RSA optimization
Match type strategy	Exact only (pre-2021)	Exact + Phrase (2025 standard)
Landing page	1:1 per keyword	1:1 per intent theme
Verdict	<b>Over-engineered (retire)</b>	<b>Recommended</b>

### Negative Keyword Architecture — Tiered Exclusion

## ACCOUNT STRUCTURE — NEGATIVE KEYWORD HIERARCHY

## ACCOUNT LEVEL (Shared Library → All Campaigns)

- [Irrelevant Industries] # Always-exclude list
  - ■■■ competitor, DIY, cheap, free, download, jobs, salary
- [Internal Brand Terms] # Route to brand campaign
  - ■■■ yourbrand, company name variants
- [Compliance Terms] # Legal/regulatory risk
  - ■■■ guaranteed cure, 100% results (healthcare/finance)

## CAMPAIGN LEVEL (Per Campaign)

- Search: exact negatives for terms handled by other campaigns
  - phrase negatives: irrelevant modifiers for this theme
- PMax: Brand terms list (sync via script — Section 02)

## AD GROUP LEVEL (Surgical)

- Cross-contamination prevention between themed STAGs
  - ex: "free" + "DIY" excluded from premium-intent groups

## RSA Pinning Strategy

Responsive Search Ads give Google up to 15 headlines and 4 descriptions. Certain elements must remain pinned for brand messaging integrity while others rotate for machine-testing.

Position	Pinning Decision	Rationale
H1 — Position 1	<b>PIN: Primary Value Prop</b>	First impression. Must match keyword intent for QS.
H2 — Position 2	<b>FREE ROTATE (3 options)</b>	Test: social proof vs. offer vs. differentiator
H3 — Position 3	<b>PIN: Primary CTA</b>	Consistent CTA reduces decision friction at point of click
D1 — Description 1	<b>PIN: Core brand message</b>	Sets context and expectation for the click
D2 — Description 2	<b>FREE ROTATE (3 options)</b>	A/B test: urgency vs. specifics vs. trust signals

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## Attribution Modeling & Profit-Based Bidding

### Optimize for Profit, Not Revenue

Optimizing to revenue is the wrong objective for most ecommerce operators. Revenue is a vanity metric when your margins vary from 10% to 70% across your product catalog. The correct target is gross profit — and Google Ads allows you to feed margin-adjusted conversion values to the bidding engine.

$$tROAS\_target = (Target\ Gross\ Margin\ \%) / (Blended\ Gross\ Margin\ \%) \times tROAS\_baseline$$

#### JAVASCRIPT — DYNAMIC CONVERSION VALUE BY MARGIN TIER

```
// Fire on purchase confirmation page via GTM
const getMarginAdjustedValue = (cartItems) => {
  const MARGIN_TIERS = {
    high_margin: { categories: ["accessories","digital"], margin: 0.65 },
    mid_margin:  { categories: ["apparel","home"],          margin: 0.40 },
    low_margin:  { categories: ["electronics","commodity"],margin: 0.18 },
  };
  return cartItems.reduce((total, item) => {
    const tier = Object.values(MARGIN_TIERS).find(t =>
      t.categories.includes(item.category)
    ) || { margin: 0.30 }; // default margin fallback
    return total + (item.price * item.quantity * tier.margin);
  }, 0);
};

gtag("event", "purchase", {
  transaction_id: orderId,
  value: getMarginAdjustedValue(cartItems), // PROFIT, not revenue
  currency: "USD",
  send_to: "AW-XXXXXXXX/XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX"
});
```

### Data-Driven Attribution — The Only Model Worth Using

Model	Best For	Risk	Use?
Last Click	Legacy reporting	Over-credits branded search, kills prospecting ROI	<b>NO</b>

Linear	Simple comparison	Ignores purchase intent recency weighting	<b>NO</b>
Position-Based	Early funnel emphasis	Arbitrary 40/20/40 split, no behavioral basis	<b>NO</b>
Data-Driven	All accounts (300+ conv/30d) Requires volume threshold		<b>YES — Always</b>

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## Real Results — Ecom & Lead Gen

### Actual Results. Not Estimations.

These are real client results available at [hanslacida.com/results](https://hanslacida.com/results). No hypothetical benchmarks. No cherry-picked outliers.

■ ECOMMERCE — GOOGLE SHOPPING + PMAX

## US Market - Home & Garden Vertical - 6-Month Engagement

**7.8x**

ROAS ACHIEVED

**+340%**

REVENUE GROWTH

**-52%**

CPA REDUCTION

#### What Was Done:

- Rebuilt PMax from single catch-all to 4 segmented asset groups by product margin tier
- Implemented server-side GTM with enhanced conversions — recovered 31% previously untracked conversions
- Customer Match upload of 12,000 past purchasers as primary audience signal
- Margin-adjusted conversion values (product-level margin from Shopify to GTM to Google Ads)
- Brand exclusion list on PMax, dedicated branded search campaign at position 1

#### View Full Case Study:

[hanslacida.com/results](https://hanslacida.com/results)

#### Book a Free ROAS Audit:

[cal.com/hanslacida](https://cal.com/hanslacida)

◆ LEAD GENERATION — SEARCH + PMAX

## US Market - MedSpa / Healthcare - 4-Month Engagement

**\$34**

COST PER LEAD

**+280%**

BOOKED APPTS

**62%**

LEAD-TO-SHOW RATE

**What Was Done:**

- Restructured from broad match chaos to STAG architecture with intent-segmented ad groups
- Offline conversion import from Acuity booking CRM — only fired after qualified appointment, not form fill
- HIPAA-compliant tracking setup: no PHI in GTM, server-side only for health-adjacent queries
- Negative keyword build-out: 400+ terms blocking non-qualified intent (DIY, insurance, Medicare)
- Geo-radius bidding adjustments: +30% bid modifier within 5-mile radius of clinic locations

**View Full Case Study:**[hanslacida.com/results](https://hanslacida.com/results)**Book a Free ROAS Audit:**[cal.com/hanslacida](https://cal.com/hanslacida)

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## Free ROAS Audit — Book Now

### Free 15-Minute ROAS Audit

If you're running Google Ads and spending more than \$3,000/month — I'll audit your account structure, tracking setup, and bidding strategy live on a 15-minute call. No pitch decks. Signal-level diagnosis and the 2-3 highest leverage fixes. US Ecom & Lead Gen only.

**Book Free 15-Min Audit** [cal.com/hanslacida](https://cal.com/hanslacida)

**Enterprise (\$100K+/mo spend):** [hanslacida.com/audit](https://hanslacida.com/audit)

<https://cal.com/hanslacida>

Who It's For	What You Get	How to Book
US-based ecommerce brands US lead gen businesses Service businesses & local B2B SaaS & mid-market	Account structure review Tracking setup diagnosis Bidding strategy assessment Top 2-3 leverage fixes identified	Visit <a href="https://cal.com/hanslacida">cal.com/hanslacida</a> Choose "15-min ROAS Audit" Connect your Google Ads (optional) Show up ready to learn

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# About the Author & Contact

## Hans Lacida

### PAID ACQUISITION SYSTEMS OPERATOR

Hans Lacida is a Paid Acquisition Systems Operator specializing in Google Ads infrastructure — not just campaign management. His focus is building measurement systems, bidding architectures, and first-party data pipelines that compound performance over time.

He works with US-based ecommerce brands, lead generation businesses, MedSpa operators, B2B SaaS companies, and high-CPC verticals including legal, finance, and home services. Based in Cebu City, Philippines.

### CORE EXPERTISE

- Google Ads full-funnel campaign architecture and optimization
- Performance Max structuring, auditing, and signal optimization
- Advanced conversion tracking — server-side GTM, enhanced conversions
- First-party data strategy (Customer Match, enhanced conv., consent mode)
- Offline conversion import and CRM integration
- ROAS/CPA optimization in high-CPC verticals

### CONTACT & BOOKING

#### Website

[hanslacida.com](https://hanslacida.com)

#### Free Audit Booking

[cal.com/hanslacida](https://cal.com/hanslacida)

#### Enterprise Audit

[hanslacida.com/audit](https://hanslacida.com/audit)

#### Results & Case Studies

[hanslacida.com/results](https://hanslacida.com/results)

#### READY TO FIX YOUR ACCOUNT?

If you recognized your account in any of the broken patterns in this guide — that's the signal.

Book a free 15-min call. Let's fix it.

This document is prepared by Hans Lacida ([hanslacida.com](https://hanslacida.com)) for educational and business development purposes. All content reflects the author's professional experience and opinions as of April 2026. Google Ads platform behavior is subject to change. Results referenced reflect actual client engagements; individual results will vary. No performance guarantee is implied or expressed.

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