THE 2026 EDITION

The Google Ads Account Audit Guide

A structured, eight-part method for finding wasted spend, unmeasured conversions and unclaimed growth inside a Google Ads account and turning what you find into a funded plan within thirty days.

Prepared for advertisers and agencies in

Côte d'Ivoire · Mauritius · Seychelles · Réunion

WHAT IS INSIDE

Contents

How to use this guide

Work through the eight checks in order, reach one depends on the one before it.
Score as you go using the scorecard from page 16.

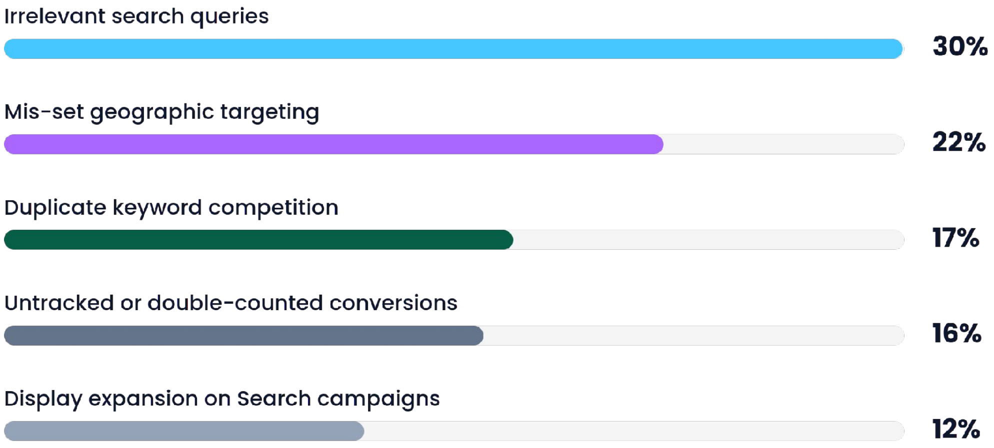
SECTION ONE

Why an audit, and why now

A Google Ads account is not a static asset. It is a living system of settings, signals and automated decisions, and it drifts. Budgets migrate towards whichever campaign spends fastest rather than whichever earns most. Search queries broaden. Tracking configured correctly at launch quietly breaks when a website is redesigned. None of this announces itself: the account keeps running, the reports keep populating, and the drift stays invisible until someone goes looking for it.

The shift towards automated bidding has raised the stakes considerably. When bids were set manually, a measurement error produced a bad report. Today it produces a bad report and a misdirected algorithm, because the same conversion data that populates the dashboard is the data the bidding model optimises against. An account with broken measurement does not simply mislead its owner, it teaches itself the wrong lesson, every day, at scale.

TYPICAL SOURCES OF INEFFICIENT SPEND



The pattern above is what our practitioners most often find when opening an unaudited account for the first time. It is not universal, and a well-run account will show far less. The point is that each source of waste is individually unremarkable and collectively material which is precisely why they survive so long without being found.

What an audit is actually for

Not to prove that an account is badly managed. To establish, with evidence, how much performance is currently unavailable to the advertiser — and what it would take to release it.

SECTION TWO

From audit to action in thirty days

An audit that produces a document is an expense. An audit that produces a funded, sequenced plan is an investment. The distinction matters because the value of a finding decays quickly: a negative keyword gap identified in January and actioned in April has already cost three months of spend. Everything in this guide is written towards a single outcome.

THE OBJECTIVE

Within thirty days, advertisers move from audit to action with a clear, data-backed path to scalable growth on Google Ads.

Why advertisers act on an audit

01 **Immediate visibility of untapped revenue** — the audit quantifies what is currently unavailable, in currency rather than in adjectives.

02 **A low-risk, structured transition** — changes are sequenced so the account is never destabilised by one large intervention.

03 **Fast time to value** — the highest-impact corrections deploy inside the first week, not at a quarterly review.

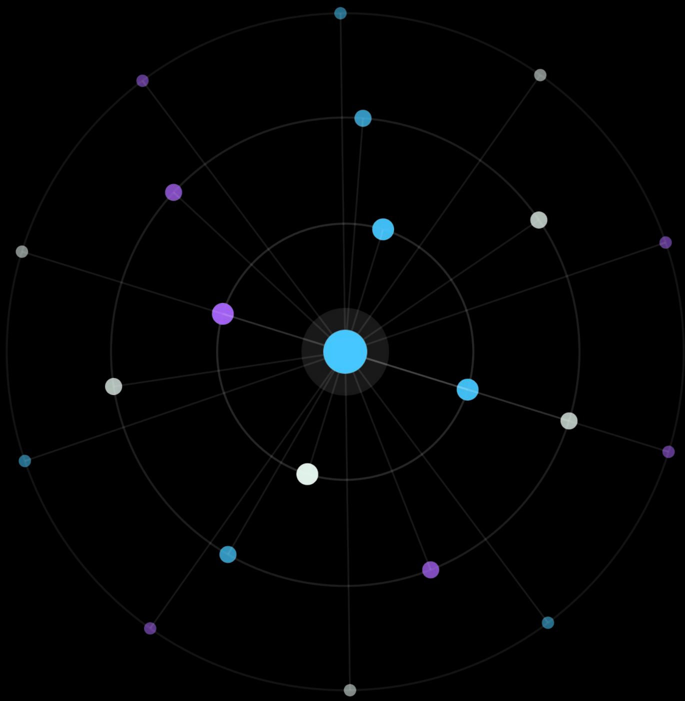
04 **Access to advanced performance capability** — the account is prepared for the products it is not yet ready to run.

The thirty-day frame is a discipline, not a promise of results

It commits to the speed of diagnosis, decision and deployment. Performance outcomes depend on budget, competition and conversion volume in each market.

PART ONE

The eight checks

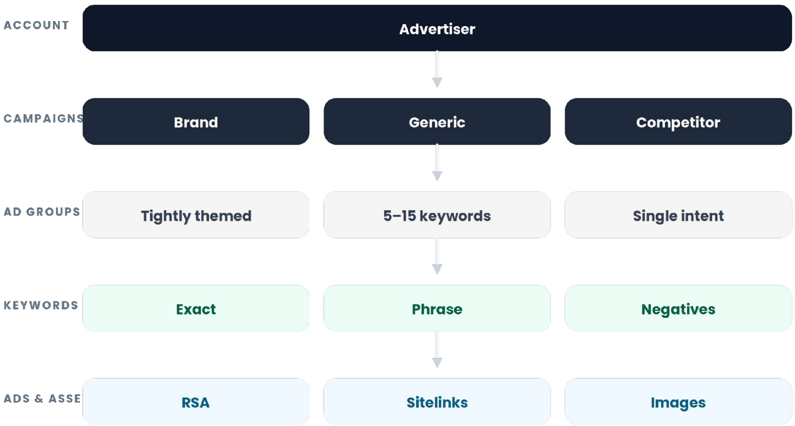


Each check is a discrete diagnostic with its own evidence and its own decision. They are sequenced deliberately: structure before targeting, measurement before bidding, and growth capability last, because an account cannot safely scale on foundations it has not yet fixed.

CHECK ONE

Account settings and structure

Begin below the campaigns. Account-level settings are unglamorous, rarely revisited and capable of distorting every number above them, a wrong time zone shifts every day part report, and an unnoticed auto-applied recommendation can rewrite a bid strategy without anyone deciding to. Structure comes next, because structure determines what the account is able to learn.



What to check

01 **Auto-applied recommendations.** Confirm which are enabled. Several change bidding and keyword coverage without review.

02 **Time zone, currency and billing.** A mis-set time zone silently invalidates every daypart and day-of-week analysis.

03 **Account-level negatives and brand safety.** Exclusion lists applied once at account level rather than repeated per campaign.

04 **Naming conventions.** Channel, objective, audience and geography encoded consistently, or reporting cannot be automated.

05 **Campaign segmentation.** Brand, generic and competitor separated so brand demand does not flatter generic performance.

06 **Ad group density.** Five to fifteen tightly themed keywords. Fifty dilutes relevance and depresses Quality Score.

The most common finding

A single campaign carrying brand, generic and competitor terms together. Reported cost per acquisition looks healthy because brand demand is subsidising everything else.

CHECK TWO

Conversion tracking and measurement

This is the most expensive place in an account to be wrong, and the hardest place to notice being wrong. Broken measurement does not produce an error message. It produces confident, well-formatted, entirely misleading numbers, and then feeds them to an automated bidding system that treats them as ground truth.

Duplicate firing on a thank-you page halves reported cost per acquisition.
The dashboard improves. The business does not.

What to check

01 **Primary versus secondary goals.** Only actions tied to real business value should be primary. Everything else is a secondary signal.

02 **Duplicate firing.** A tag firing twice on a thank-you page halves reported cost per acquisition and corrupts bidding.

03 **Conversion window and counting.** One per click for lead generation; every conversion for retail. Confirm which is set.

04 **Attribution model.** Data-driven where eligible. Last-click flatters the final touch and starves upper-funnel activity.

05 **Offline and qualified-lead import.** Whether the account knows which enquiries actually became revenue.

06 **Consent, tagging and data loss.** Consent mode, enhanced conversions and server-side integrity — particularly under GDPR in Réunion.

Stop here if this check fails

There is no value in optimising bids, keywords or creative against measurement known to be inaccurate. Fix the signal first. Everything downstream depends on it.

CHECK THREE

Campaign settings and targeting

Targeting is where budget leaves the market without ever reaching a plausible buyer. The defaults are permissive by design, and permissive defaults are expensive in small, multilingual and island markets, where a slightly loose radius reaches an entirely different economy.

Côte d'Ivoire	Mauritius	Seychelles	Réunion
Francophone	Multilingual	Tourism-led	French DOM
XOF	advanced services	132k	EU/GDPR
~30m	1.27m		896k

The four markets in scope do not behave alike, and a setting correct in one is frequently wrong in another. Language, currency, device mix, seasonality and regulatory context all differ. Presence-and-interest targeting deserves particular scrutiny wherever inbound tourism, diaspora traffic or cross-border search is significant.

What to check

01 **Location targeting method.** Presence, or presence and interest. The second reaches people who are not in the market.

02 **Network settings.** Search Partners and Display expansion on Search campaigns is a common source of low-quality volume.

03 **Language and creative match.** French-first in Côte d'Ivoire and Réunion. Translated assets read as imported and convert worse.

04 **Device and bid modifiers.** Reviewed against conversion rate by device, not against traffic share.

05 **Ad scheduling.** Aligned to when enquiries are answered, not only to when they are made.

06 **Audience and customer match.** Applied for observation before targeting, with a documented lawful basis for the data.

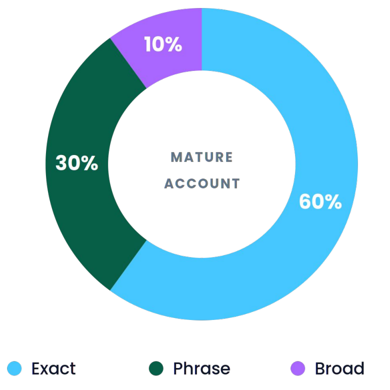
Market-specific caution

Réunion sits inside the EU regulatory perimeter. Audience data practices that are acceptable elsewhere in the cluster require a documented GDPR lawful basis there.

CHECK FOUR

Keywords and search terms

The keyword list states what an advertiser intended to buy. The search terms report states what they actually bought. The distance between the two is the most reliable predictor of wasted spend in a Search account, and it widens continuously as matching behaviour becomes more interpretive.



A workable starting distribution

Roughly sixty percent of spend on exact match, thirty on phrase and ten on broad is a defensible shape for a mature account with reliable conversion signal.

Broad match is not the problem it once was, but it is only safe in proportion to the quality of the conversion data guiding it, and to the discipline of the negative list beneath it. An account with weak measurement should not run broad match at scale.

What to check

01 **Search terms, last ninety days.** Read them. Most accounts hold fewer than two hundred negatives where they need far more.

02 **Negative keyword hygiene.** Applied at the right level, with shared lists, and reviewed on a defined cadence.

03 **Internal competition.** The same query served by multiple ad groups inflates cost per click and splits Quality Score.

04 **Non-converting, high-cost terms.** Identified and either paused, restructured or moved to a lower-intent campaign.

05 **Quality Score distribution.** Keywords below six out of ten diagnosed by component, not treated as a single number.

06 **Coverage gaps.** Competitor, generic and long-tail demand the account is not currently bidding on at all.

A brand-only account is not a healthy account

If most spend sits on brand terms, the account is harvesting demand that already exists rather than creating any. That is a growth ceiling, not a performance result.

CHECK FIVE

Bidding and budget allocation

Automated bidding is usually discussed as a strategy choice. It is more usefully understood as a data threshold. Smart bidding rarely fails because it is the wrong strategy; it fails because it was given too little conversion volume, too short a learning period, or a target that no history supports.

CONVERSIONS IN THE LAST 30 DAYS

Under 15
Manual or Maximise Clicks

15–30
Maximise Conversions

30+
Target CPA viable

50+
Target ROAS viable

Readiness before strategy

Conversion volume in the trailing thirty days determines which strategies are viable. Setting a Target ROAS on an account producing eight conversions a month does not produce efficiency; it produces erratic delivery and a learning period that never resolves.

Where volume is thin, the correct move is usually to broaden the conversion definition to a reliable upper-funnel action, stabilise the signal, and migrate later.

What to check

01 **Conversion volume against the strategy in use.** The threshold test run per campaign rather than per account.

02 **Target realism.** Targets set against achieved historical performance, not against an aspiration.

03 **Learning period stability.** No further changes for seven to fourteen days after a bid strategy change.

04 **Budget-constrained campaigns.** Impression share lost to budget on campaigns that are already efficient.

05 **Impression share lost to rank.** A relevance and Quality Score problem, not a budget problem. Diagnose before spending.

06 **Portfolio grouping logic.** Campaigns sharing a strategy should share seasonality, audience and conversion behaviour.

The most common misdiagnosis

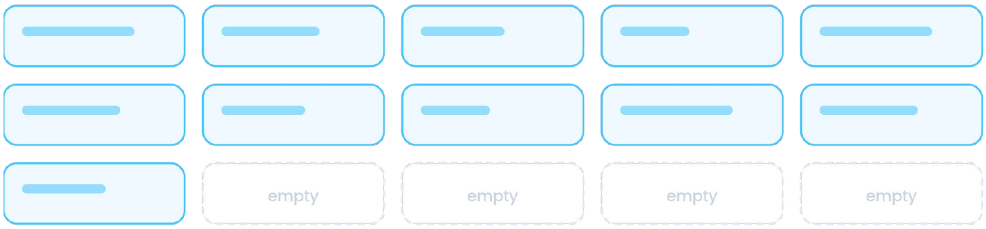
Underperformance attributed to the bid strategy when the underlying cause is insufficient or inaccurate conversion data. Complete checks two and four before changing anything here.

CHECK SIX

Ads, assets and creative coverage

Creative is the last remaining lever that automation cannot supply on the advertiser's behalf. The system will assemble, test and serve combinations at a speed no team can match — but only from the raw material it is given, and most accounts supply materially less than they are entitled to.

RESPONSIVE SEARCH AD — ASSET COVERAGE



11 of 15 headlines supplied. Ad Strength caps at Good.
Unused slots are unbid inventory, not tidy restraint.

What to check

01 **Asset completeness.** Headline and description slots filled, and thematically distinct rather than slightly reworded.

02 **Ad Strength.** Not a ranking factor in itself, but a reliable proxy for how much the system has to work with.

03 **Pinning discipline.** Pin only what compliance or brand genuinely requires. Over-pinning suppresses testing.

04 **Extension and asset coverage.** Sitelinks, callouts, structured snippets, images and, where relevant, lead forms.

05 **Message-to-query alignment.** The ad answers the query rather than describing the advertiser.

06 **Creative refresh cadence.** Click-through decay after ninety days is normal and predictable. Plan for it.

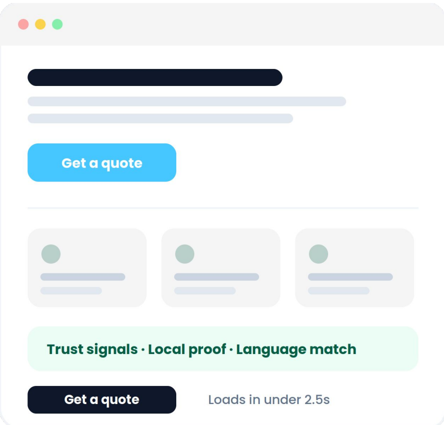
A note on local relevance

Creative written for one market and deployed across four will underperform in at least three. Language, currency, payment methods and proof points are not cosmetic details.

CHECK SEVEN

Landing pages and conversion experience

The account can be flawless and still fail here. Everything upstream buys attention; the landing page decides whether that attention becomes a conversion. It is also, in most organisations, the part of the funnel the media team does not control, which is precisely why it is so often left unexamined.



Five things the page must do

Echo the promise made in the ad, in the same language and the same words. State the benefit before the feature. Give a reason to trust, local proof, accreditation, a recognisable name. Place a clear action high on the page and again below the fold. And load quickly enough that a mobile connection does not decide the outcome.

Mobile-first is not a preference in these markets. It is the traffic.

What to check

01 **Message match.** Ad headline and page headline carrying the same promise, verified ad group by ad group.

02 **Mobile load performance.** Measured on a representative connection, not on office broadband.

03 **Form friction.** Every field justified. Each additional field costs completions.

04 **Trust and local proof.** Recognisable local signals rather than imported global credentials.

05 **Conversion path integrity.** The thank-you state confirmed to fire the tag once, and only once.

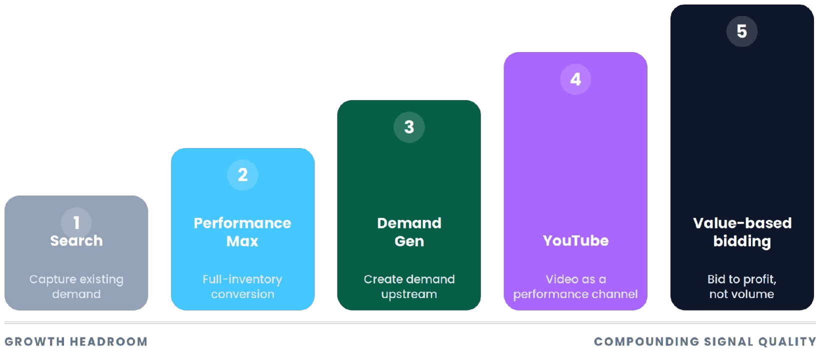
Where to look first

Sort conversion rate by ad group and compare against the account average. The outliers are usually a page problem rather than a media problem.

CHECK EIGHT

Growth headroom and advanced capability

The first seven checks establish what an account is doing badly. The eighth establishes what it is not doing at all, and in a well-run account, that is usually the larger number. Most advertisers in these markets operate a competent Search programme and little beyond it, which means their ceiling is set by demand that already exists.



Each step upward requires the one beneath it to be sound. Performance Max deployed on broken measurement will spend efficiently towards the wrong outcome. Value-based bidding without revenue import is a target without a denominator. Capability is sequenced, not selected.

What to check

01 **Channel coverage.** Which campaign types are absent, and whether their absence is a decision or an oversight.

02 **Signal readiness for each.** Conversion volume, value data and audience assets required before deployment.

03 **Seasonal and event calendar.** Demand peaks specific to each market that are not currently planned against.

04 **Measurement of incrementality.** Whether new channels can be evaluated, or will simply reallocate existing conversions.

The honest sequencing rule

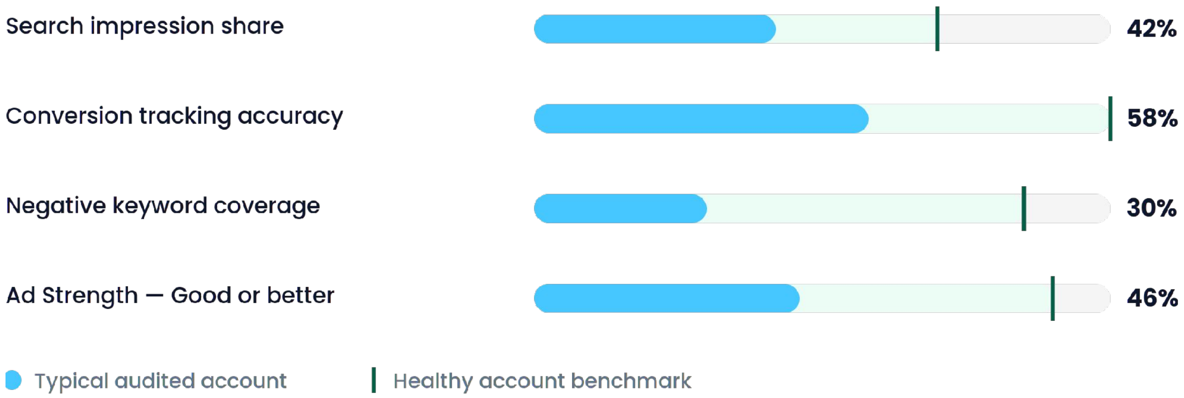
No advanced product is recommended until checks two and four pass. Deploying capability onto an unreliable signal accelerates the wrong outcome rather than improving it.

SECTION ELEVEN

Benchmarks — what good looks like

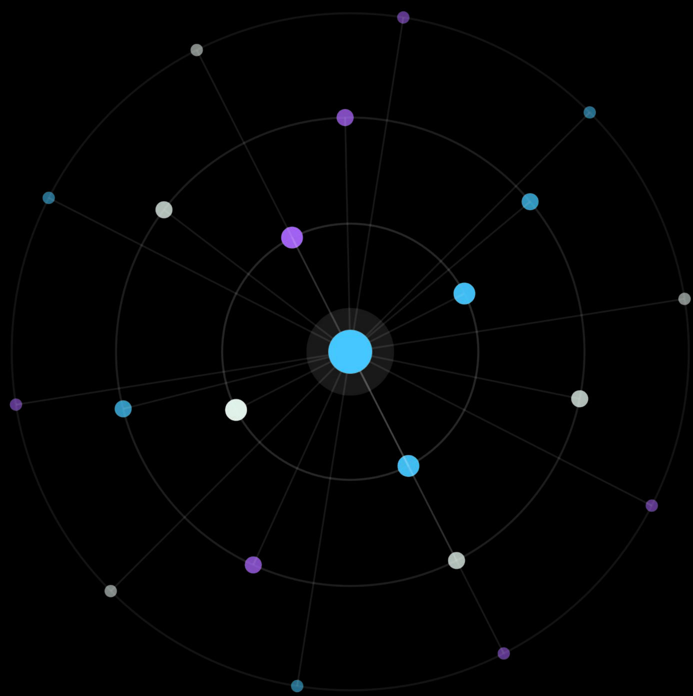
Benchmarks are a diagnostic aid, not a target. Cost per click and conversion rate vary so widely by vertical, market and intent that a cross-industry average is close to meaningless as a goal. The ranges below serve a different purpose: identifying which part of an account is furthest from where it ought to be, so that effort is spent where the gap is widest.

WHERE AUDITED ACCOUNTS TYPICALLY SIT AGAINST WHERE THEY SHOULD



Reference ranges for a healthy account

Search impression share On priority campaigns. Below 50% is a budget or a rank problem — diagnose which.	**65–80%**
Impression share lost to rank Above this indicates a relevance and Quality Score issue, not a budget one.	**Under 15%**
Quality Score On priority keywords. Below 6 raises cost per click by a meaningful margin.	**7 or above**
Conversion tracking accuracy The only metric here with no acceptable range.	**100%**
Ad Strength On every live ad. Average or Poor signals unused asset capacity.	**Good or better**
Negative keyword coverage Cadence matters considerably more than list length.	**Monthly review**



PART TWO

The audit scorecard

Forty checkpoints across the eight checks. Score each one pass, partial or fail, then read the banding on page 18. The scorecard is designed to be printed and completed by hand, or copied into a spreadsheet and shared with whoever manages the account.

SECTION TWELVE

The 40-point audit scorecard

Score each checkpoint: 2 for a pass, 1 for partial, 0 for a fail. Maximum score 80. Read the banding on page 18.

	PASS	PART	FAIL
01 SETTINGS AND STRUCTURE			
Auto-applied recommendations reviewed and consciously set	☐	☐	☐
Time zone, currency and billing profile correct	☐	☐	☐
Account-level negative and brand-safety lists applied	☐	☐	☐
Naming convention consistent and machine-readable	☐	☐	☐
Brand, generic and competitor campaigns separated	☐	☐	☐
Ad groups hold five to fifteen tightly themed keywords	☐	☐	☐
02 TRACKING AND MEASUREMENT			
Primary conversion goals tied to real business value	☐	☐	☐
No duplicate or double-firing conversion tags	☐	☐	☐
Conversion window and counting method deliberate	☐	☐	☐
Attribution model appropriate to the sales cycle	☐	☐	☐
Qualified-lead or offline revenue imported	☐	☐	☐
Consent mode and enhanced conversions configured	☐	☐	☐
03 SETTINGS AND TARGETING			
Location targeting set to presence where appropriate	☐	☐	☐
Search Partners and Display expansion reviewed	☐	☐	☐
Language and creative match the market, French-first where required	☐	☐	☐
Device bid modifiers set against conversion rate	☐	☐	☐
Ad scheduling aligned to response capability	☐	☐	☐
Audience data holds a documented lawful basis	☐	☐	☐

SECTION TWELVE · CONTINUED

	PASS	PART	FAIL
04 KEYWORDS AND SEARCH TERMS			
Search terms reviewed for the last ninety days	☐	☐	☐
Negative lists applied at the correct level	☐	☐	☐
No internal competition between ad groups	☐	☐	☐
High-cost non-converting terms actioned	☐	☐	☐
Quality Score diagnosed by component	☐	☐	☐
Competitor and generic coverage gaps identified	☐	☐	☐
05 BIDDING AND BUDGET			
Conversion volume supports the strategy in use	☐	☐	☐
Targets set against achieved history	☐	☐	☐
Learning periods respected after changes	☐	☐	☐
Budget-constrained efficient campaigns identified	☐	☐	☐
Impression share loss diagnosed by cause	☐	☐	☐
06 ADS AND CREATIVE			
Headline and description slots fully supplied	☐	☐	☐
Ad Strength Good or better on all live ads	☐	☐	☐
Pinning limited to genuine requirements	☐	☐	☐
Full extension and asset coverage in place	☐	☐	☐
Creative refresh cadence defined	☐	☐	☐

A note on partial scores

Score 1 where something exists but is not maintained, a negative list that was built once and never reviewed, or an attribution model that was chosen by default rather than by decision. Partials are where most recoverable value sits.

SECTION TWELVE · CONTINUED

07 LANDING PAGES	PASS	PART	FAIL
Message match verified ad group by ad group	☐	☐	☐
Mobile load performance measured and acceptable	☐	☐	☐
Form fields minimised and justified	☐	☐	☐
Local trust signals present	☐	☐	☐
Conversion path fires once and only once	☐	☐	☐

08 GROWTH HEADROOM	PASS	PART	FAIL
Absent channels identified as decision or oversight	☐	☐	☐
Signal readiness assessed per channel	☐	☐	☐
Market seasonal calendar planned against	☐	☐	☐

Reading your score

64 – 80
HEALTHY
The account is well managed. Growth will come from check eight rather than from remediation.

40 – 63
DRIFTING
Foundations are sound but maintenance has lapsed. Most findings are recoverable inside a month.

Under 40
LEAKING
Material spend is being lost. Prioritise checks two and four before anything else.

SECTION THIRTEEN

What happens after the audit

A completed scorecard is a diagnosis. It is not yet a plan, and a diagnosis that sits in a folder changes nothing. The work that follows an audit matters more than the audit itself, which is why 365 Digital structures it rather than leaving it to goodwill. Three commitments shape how we work with advertisers and agencies across Côte d'Ivoire, Mauritius, Seychelles and Réunion.

Portfolio-Led Market Approach

Accounts are planned as a portfolio across the cluster rather than in isolation, so that learning, seasonality and vertical evidence in one market inform decisions in the next.

30-Day Conversion Sprint

A defined thirty-day cycle taking an account from audit findings to deployed corrections to a measured, funded growth plan — with a baseline captured before anything changes.

Africa Centre of Excellence

A centralised specialist team supporting every market, so that an advertiser in Seychelles has access to the same depth of technical capability as one in a far larger market.

30 days
From audit findings to a funded, sequenced growth plan

4 markets
Côte d'Ivoire, Mauritius, Seychelles and Réunion

No extra cost
Our services carry no additional cost to your media investment

How we are engaged

365 Digital is an authorised Google Ads sales representative in these markets. Billing for media remains direct with Google, and our advisory, audit and account management services are provided at no additional cost to the media investment.

THE NEXT STEP

No-Cost Google Ads Account Audit

Are you certain your Google Ads account is running as efficiently as it could be? Request an audit from our Centre of Excellence and receive a practitioner review of your account structure, measurement, targeting, bidding and creative with a prioritised thirty-day action plan attached to it.

REQUEST YOUR AUDIT

365digital.africa/google-ads-audit

365 Digital is an authorised Google Ads sales representative in Côte d'Ivoire, Mauritius, Seychelles and Réunion. Billing for media remains direct with Google. Our advisory, audit and account management services are provided at no additional cost to the media investment.