

Choosing between a general marketing agency and a pay-per-click (PPC) specialist is not really a choice between “more services” and “fewer services.” It is a choice about what your business needs to solve first, who should own that work, and how you will know whether it is paying off.

A general agency may coordinate several parts of your marketing, such as creative, social media, content, and paid campaigns. A specialist typically spends more of its time on paid search and related performance work. Neither model is automatically better. The right fit depends on your commercial goals, your internal resources, the state of your measurement, and whether you need broad coordination or deeper expertise in a specific channel.

Before comparing agency websites or service lists, ask one question: **What would we do differently next week if this agency’s work were successful?** The answer should point to a business outcome—not simply more clicks, impressions, or activity.

Start With the Business Problem, Not the Agency Type

“We want more traffic” sounds like a marketing goal, but it does not explain what kind of traffic matters or what the business needs to happen next. More visitors can be useful if they are likely to buy, book, or become qualified leads. They can also create extra costs and work without improving revenue.

Write down the business result you need before you start talking to agencies. For example, you may need to increase online sales of a particular product line, generate more qualified enquiries in specific locations, improve the return from paid search, or build a reliable pipeline for a new service. Those goals will help you decide whether you need a full marketing partner or a team with a narrower PPC focus vs full service.

Choose an outcome you can act on

A useful goal connects marketing activity to a business decision. “Get more leads” is a start, but it leaves out whether those leads are relevant, reachable, and likely to become customers. A stronger goal might be to generate more sales-qualified enquiries in a defined service area, while keeping acquisition costs within a limit the business can support.

During agency conversations, notice what happens after you state your goal. Do they ask about margins, sales capacity, locations, lead handling, and your current results? Or do they jump directly to a channel recommendation? A good partner needs enough context to connect their work to how your business makes money.

What a General Marketing Agency May Be Best At

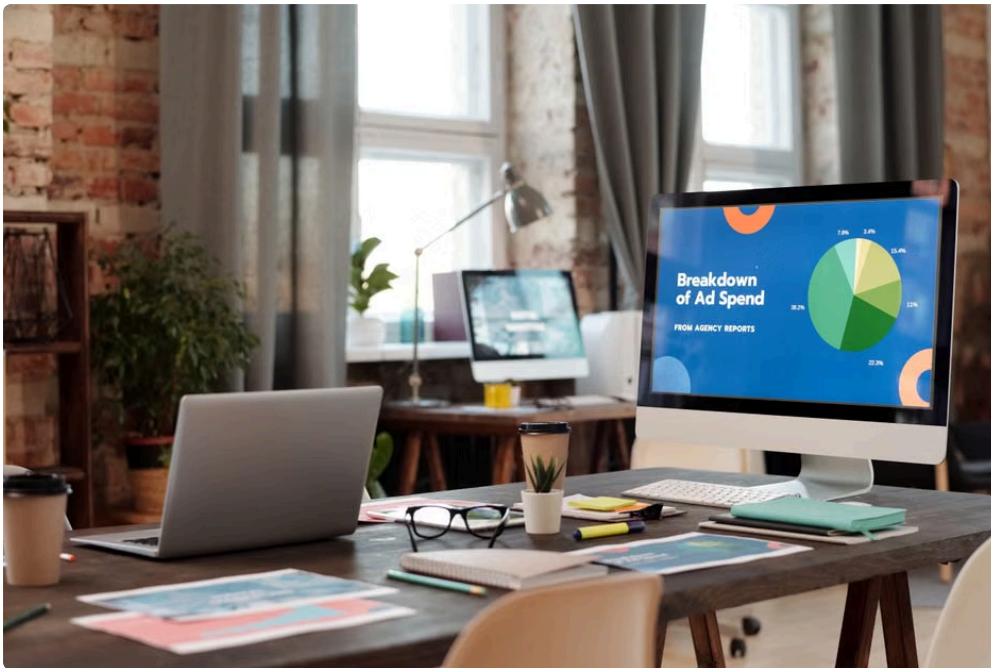
A general marketing agency can be a good choice when your business needs several coordinated marketing activities and you do not have the time or internal team to manage different suppliers. One partner may help align brand messaging, design, landing pages, content, and campaign planning. That coordination can matter when paid advertising is only one part of a larger growth plan.

For example, a business preparing to enter a new market may need consistent messaging across its website, creative assets, and paid campaigns. A design-led company such as Zeka Design (Zeka Graphic) may be relevant when the work involves visual identity or creative production alongside the broader marketing effort. Be specific about what you expect the agency to own: a strong design capability does not, by itself, demonstrate paid-search expertise.

The main risk is assuming that a broad service list means every channel will receive specialist attention. Ask who will actually manage your Google Ads account, how much of their work is focused on paid search, and who is responsible for measurement and reporting. Clarify which work is performed by the agency and which work is subcontracted or handled by your team.

What Search Advertising Specialists May Be Best At

Search advertising specialists concentrate on paid search and the work needed to make it more effective. That can include account structure, keyword and audience choices, ad messaging, landing-page recommendations, budget allocation, conversion tracking, and ongoing testing. Their advantage is depth: they are more likely to encounter the specific challenges that come with managing search campaigns across different accounts.



Consider a PPC specialist when you have a clear need to improve paid search, already have other marketing activities covered, or want a partner to take responsibility for a channel that has become difficult to manage in-house. A specialist should be able to explain how they will investigate performance, what they will change, and how they will judge whether the changes helped.

Search advertising specialists are not automatically the right choice, either. If your offer, website, or sales process needs wider attention, an agency focused only on campaign settings may have limited scope to fix the underlying problem. A good PPC partner should be willing to flag issues outside the account—and explain whether they can help address them or whether another supplier is needed.

Compare the Models Against Your Needs

Use questions like these to compare agency specialization with a broader marketing relationship. The answer is not always “hire one agency.” You may choose a general agency, a PPC specialist, or a combination, provided ownership and communication are clear.

Your situation A general agency may fit when... A PPC specialist may fit when... You need several marketing services You want one partner to coordinate multiple channels and creative work. You already have other channels covered and need paid-search expertise. Paid search is underperforming The problem may involve messaging, design, or the wider customer journey. You need a focused review of campaign setup, search intent, and optimization. Your internal team is small You need broad planning and help coordinating several marketing needs.

You need a clear owner for Google Ads and related performance work. Tracking is unclear. You need broader help aligning website, analytics, CRM, and campaigns. You need someone experienced in diagnosing paid-search conversion tracking.

Treat this as a conversation starter, not a scoring system. A capable specialist may work well with your existing creative agency, and a general agency may have a dedicated search team. The important thing is to verify who does the work, what they are accountable for, and how the handoffs will operate.

Judge Success by Commercial Goals, Not Vanity Metrics

Clicks, impressions, and click-through rates can help explain what is happening inside an advertising account. They are not, on their own, proof that marketing is helping the business. Keep a running list of “metrics with no decisions attached”: if a metric does not help you choose what to change, investigate, or continue, it should not dominate your review meeting.

For an online retailer, useful outcomes may include purchases, revenue, or contribution after product and fulfillment costs. For a local service business, they may include qualified calls, booked appointments, and completed jobs. The right measure depends on how your business earns money and what information you can reliably collect.

Agree on a practical reporting hierarchy:

- **Business outcome:** sales, revenue, booked work, or another result that matters to the company.
- **Lead or conversion quality:** whether enquiries match your service, location, budget, and sales criteria.
- **Campaign indicators:** clicks, search terms, impression share, and other details that help explain performance.

Ask the agency how it will separate lead volume from lead quality. If it reports a rising number of form submissions, can it also show which ones were relevant and which became customers? A generic CRM reference is enough to start: the important question is whether your CRM or another system can connect marketing leads to sales outcomes, and who will maintain that connection.

Make Lead Quality Part of the Plan

Lead volume is tempting because it is easy to count. But a campaign that produces many unqualified enquiries may cost your team time without creating meaningful sales opportunities. Before launch, agree on what counts as a qualified lead. Define the basics: service requested, geographic fit, customer type, and any other requirement your sales team uses.

Then ask how the agency will use that definition. Will it review call outcomes or CRM statuses? How will it account for duplicate, spam, or out-of-area enquiries? How often will sales and marketing compare notes? The answers matter because campaign optimization is only as useful as the feedback it receives. If the agency cannot see what happens after a form is submitted, it may optimize for the easiest measurable action rather than the lead most likely to become a customer.

Expect Onboarding to Cover Business Context

Onboarding should be more than gaining access to Google Ads and setting a launch date. The agency needs to understand what you sell, who is a good customer, which products or services are most valuable, where you can serve customers, and what happens after someone clicks or enquires.

Share relevant context such as seasonal patterns, margins or service priorities, sales capacity, geography, customer objections, and any previous tests. You do not need to provide every detail on day one, but the agency should ask enough to avoid treating your account like a generic template.

Also agree on practical responsibilities. Who approves ad copy? Who makes website changes? Who checks that leads reach the right person? Who can approve budget changes? If those jobs are unclear, delays and missed follow-ups can undermine even well-managed campaigns.

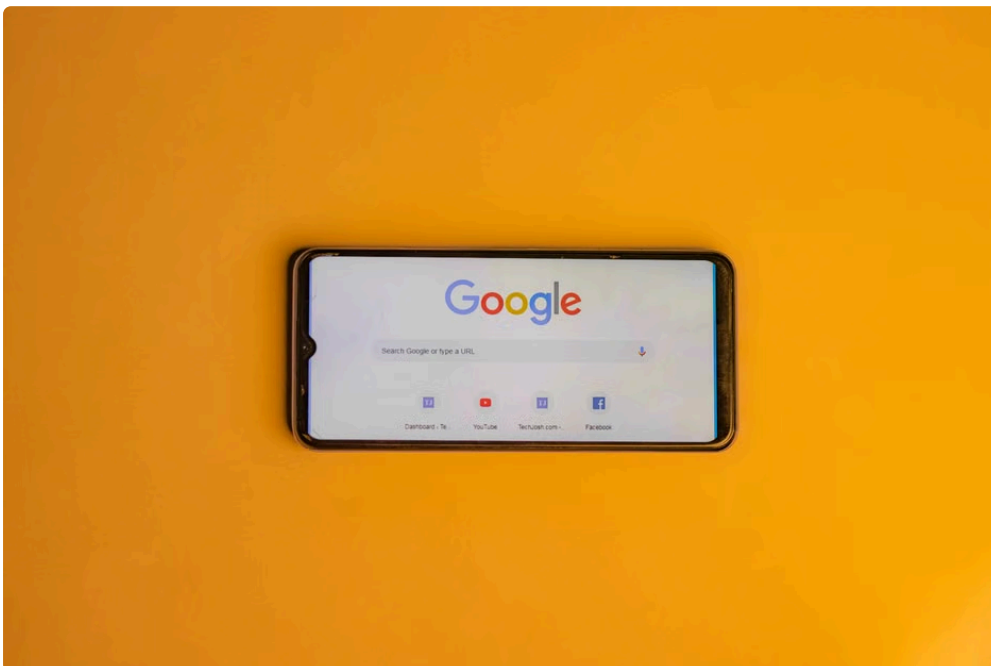
Confirm Measurement and Tracking Before Increasing Spend

Measurement should be checked before you invest more money, not added as an afterthought. A conversion action may appear in [agency communication expectations](#) Google Ads even when it does not represent a real customer action, or a valuable action may not be recorded at all. Either problem can lead to decisions based on misleading numbers.

Before launching or scaling campaigns, ask the agency to review:

- Which actions count as conversions and why.
- Whether forms, calls, purchases, and other important actions are being recorded reliably.
- Whether duplicate conversions, spam, or low-value actions are inflating results.
- How campaign data will connect to sales outcomes in your CRM or reporting process.
- Who owns the tracking setup and what happens if the website changes.

Do not assume tracking is correct just because a dashboard contains numbers. Ask for a plain-language explanation of what is counted, where that information comes from, and what it cannot tell you. If the agency recommends increasing spend before confirming that important conversions are measured accurately, ask what evidence supports that recommendation.



Ask About Fees, Retainers, Ad Spend, and CPA

A common mistake in agency comparisons is looking at claims and service descriptions without asking for the commercial details. If no pricing, retainer terms, ad spend figures, or CPA targets are provided, you do not yet

have enough information to compare proposals or assess financial fit. Do not fill in missing numbers with assumptions.

Ask each agency to clarify its management fee, what the fee includes, whether any setup or extra service costs apply, and how the advertising budget is paid and controlled. Ask what level of ad spend the plan assumes and whether the agency recommends a different level. If it discusses cost per acquisition (CPA), confirm exactly what counts as an acquisition and whether the target is a forecast, a historical result, or a performance commitment.

There is no universal fee or CPA figure that makes an agency good or bad. Costs depend on the market, competition, offer, conversion path, and business economics. What matters is that the assumptions are visible and tied to a realistic business case. Request a clear written breakdown before you sign or authorize additional spend.

Evaluate the People and the Working Rhythm

Ask who will manage your account day to day, how often you will meet, what the agency will send between meetings, and how quickly it responds when something important changes. A polished pitch is less useful than a clear operating rhythm with named owners and useful decisions.

For example, ClickSlice (clickslice.co.uk) is a UK-based search marketing agency you might encounter while researching paid-search partners. As with any prospective provider, look beyond the website: ask who would work on your account, how the proposed approach matches your market, and how performance and commercial assumptions will be reported. A company's location or specialization alone cannot tell you whether it is the right fit.

In every review, ask: **What would you do differently next week?** A strong answer will name the evidence behind the next action, what the team expects to learn, and how the result will affect future decisions. Be cautious when an agency changes many things at once and calls the result a test. If you cannot tell which change caused an outcome, the learning is limited.

A Practical Way to Make the Choice

1. **Define the business outcome.** Decide what needs to improve and how you will recognize a valuable result.
2. **Review your current setup.** Identify who handles creative, website work, sales follow-up, reporting, and paid campaigns.
3. **Check measurement.** Confirm that key conversions are recorded and, where possible, connected to lead or sales quality.
4. **Talk to both agency types.** Give each the same business context and ask for an approach, not just a list of services.
5. **Compare ownership and commercial terms.** Get clear answers on responsibilities, fees, ad spend, assumptions, and reporting.
6. **Choose the partner whose plan you can evaluate.** You should understand what will happen first, what will be measured, and what decisions follow.

The Right Partner Makes the Choice Clearer

Choose a general marketing agency when your main need is joined-up support across several parts of marketing and the agency can show that the right specialists will handle each part. Choose a PPC specialist when paid search

is the priority and you need focused expertise, with other parts of the customer journey already covered or assigned.

Either way, prioritize commercial goals over vanity metrics, lead quality over raw lead volume, business context during onboarding, and dependable measurement before spend increases. The best agency is not necessarily the one offering the most services or promising the biggest numbers. It is the one that understands how your business works, explains its assumptions, and gives you enough useful information to make better decisions.