



**PORTENT**  
*interactive*

# The Complete Guide

*To Taking The Microsoft adExcellence Exam*

**By Elizabeth Marsten**



# Legal, Notes and Other Stuff

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## *Who is this book for?*

Anyone who wants to just pass (80%) the adExcellence exam and not spend the 2hrs and 35minutes watching the video tutorials, not counting loading time or any note taking time. Basically you can now complete what would have taken the length of watching Gone with the Wind and enjoy it at the rate of watching an Adam Sandler movie.

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That's a fancy way of saying: please don't steal from me. It's not cool.

If you like this book, you might want to check out Elizabeth's posts at the Portent blog [www.portent.com](http://www.portent.com).

If you want to talk to Elizabeth, you can reach her at [elizabeth@portent.com](mailto:elizabeth@portent.com).



# Table of Contents

*To really get the most out of this e-book, read the whole thing through once and then go pass the exam.*

<b>4</b>	<i>Taking the Microsoft adExcellence Exam</i>
<b>5</b>	<i>Introduction to Microsoft AdCenter</i>
<b>14</b>	<i>Getting Started</i>
<b>20</b>	<i>Targeting</i>
<b>23</b>	<i>Tracking Ad Performance</i>
<b>33</b>	<i>Optimizing Ad Performance</i>
<b>43</b>	<i>Budgeting and Billing</i>
<b>47</b>	<i>adCenter Desktop Editor</i>

## Taking the Microsoft adExcellence Exam

It's taken me longer than I wanted, but finally I have documented the highlights from each of the 32 videos (so that you don't have to watch them all) and hopefully saved you a couple of hours at least. Total running time is 2hrs and 35mins, not counting load up time or any note taking time.

The adCenter full length video training center doesn't have ANY text versions, but it does have the handy "start the test" button at the bottom.

To start:

Have or create a Windows Live ID to take the exam. And create a profile.

It costs \$50. It's 100 questions long over a 90 minute time period. A passing score (80% or higher) is only good for a year and then you have to take it again.

The nice thing is once you pass, it does tell you what your pass rate was per section of the test.

Happy studying!

**Score Breakdown**  
Below, you will find a detailed explanation of your test results organized by the exam question categories. We recommend reviewing training modules for categories with a score less than 80%.

Section	Your Score	Result
Introduction to Microsoft adCenter	95%	Passed
Getting Started	85%	Passed
Targeting	93.33%	Passed
Tracking Ad Performance	100%	Passed
Optimizing Ad Performance	93.33%	Passed
adCenter Budgeting and Billing	90%	Passed



# Introduction to Microsoft adCenter

Back in 2006 I took this little test for Yahoo to become a Search Ambassador. The test was pretty silly, a few of the questions actually required an answer that proclaimed Yahoo to be the greatest like “With the most searches globally, which search engine has more than X million searches?” Choose from Google, Yahoo, MSN or Ask. The answer of course, was Yahoo. I passed it, printed out my certificate and never looked back.

MSN began their version not too long ago and of similar difficulty level. It’s not nearly as hard as Google’s but it does require you to know a couple things about adCenter.

And if you pass, you get a badge. A badge!

## *Getting Started*

The learning center can be accessed for free. But it’s all videos. Every single lesson. Approximately 2hours and 35mins of this. Not counting load time or note time taking. You know what I can do faster than watch videos? Read. You know who’s probably pretty fast through this kind of thing? Advertisers that have been in the industry and used the interface

for several years. Videos are great for the brand new folks, but what about those of us that are just trying to get through it? And this brings us to the reason behind the series.

The basics- it costs \$50 every time you take it, if you need more than once. It's 100 questions long over a 90 minute time period. A passing score is only good for a year and then you have to take it (and pay) again.

The question format is multiple choice, but there is one twist- some of the questions show a screenshot of the adCenter user interface and a little red targeting tool (it actually looks like a sniper rifle type of target) where you place the target on the screenshot by clicking based on the question. So the question might something like "Where would you go to add negative keywords to a campaign?" And the screenshot will be on the campaign setting page- you then click where you would complete that action to answer the question. You can still change your answer, if you re-click somewhere else on the page, the target moves. Your answer isn't set until you click to go to the next question.

And what you really came for- how to pass this exam without having to watch every video, minute for minute: *(Warning! This is for paid search marketers that have been there and done that- as in they've been using adCenter, are AdWords certified and want to just get this out of the way. If you're new to using adCenter, you should watch some of the videos.)*

## #1 - *What is Microsoft AdCenter?* (2:17)

This is a very basic- it's what PPC is and how to make the most of your advertising dollars type video. Skip it.

## #2 - *Editorial Guidelines* (12:24)

The transition here is steep if you were new to PPC. Here's 2mins of what PPC is and now here's 12 minutes to scare the heck out of you. This video goes over a myriad of adCenter policies pertaining to:

- Ad Content, style: can't use "click here," superlatives, slogans.
- Spelling, grammar, abbreviations
- Capitalization, punctuation
- Character limits
- Phone numbers
- Duplication in ads and promotional ad copy: "free" is allowed if the terms and conditions are listed in the ad.
- Disallowed content guidelines:
- Hate speech, profanity and defamation: can't say things like "view compromising photos of X here"

- Religious and political content: has to be informative content about individuals or organizations

Basically the same as AdWords here. Follow their character limits, capitalization, good spelling and grammar and you're good to go. Also don't call anyone's mama a bad name.

\* \* \*

The biggest takeaway from the 12minutes for experienced users: phone numbers in ads. They can only appear in if it's part of the advertiser's name and does not include a call to action. So 1-800 Flowers is OK to use in ads, but "call 1-888-123-4567 for more" is not allowed.

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Mobile ads can have phone numbers in the ads, but no special characters.

### **What Can You / Can't You Sell:**

- No "legally questionable" business opportunities (ponzi/pyramid schemes, chains or solicitation of funds). Downloads must be initiated.
- Ads ARE allowed for wine & beer and alcohol related items (shot glasses, liquor filled candy), smoking cessation and tobacco accessories.
- NO ads for hard alcoholic beverages, tobacco products, electric cigarettes, nicotine cartridges, illegal drugs & paraphenalia, certain



## Not allowed

- Hate speech
- Profane terms and violent content
- Defamatory, libelous or slanderous content

### [Senator Park](#)

View compromising photos of **Senator Dan Park**.

Keyword: *Senator Park*

health supplements, herbs and at home HIV tests.

- Ads ARE allowed for legal gun parts, paintball guns, stun guns, knives, traditional martial arts weapons, marked imitation guns. bows, pepper spray “as permitted by law” (you have to check what the local laws are).
- NO ads for knives as weapons (you advertising that’s what they should be used for), firearms, “integral parts,” militia ordinance, grenades, fireworks/pyrotechnics.
- NO ads for bootleg products, fake IDs, devices to avoid traffic tickets, evade security systems, beat drug tests, receive free cable, web-cams/surveillance equipment for “spying for pleasure.”

## Gambling

Hotels and Casinos can advertise but not for online gambling- promotions or links to online gambling must not present, no matter how many clicks away “it must be impossible for your site visitor to navigate from your website to any prohibited gambling or wagering content.”

In the UK- there’s a gambling addendum: as long as the establishment is registered with the UK Gambling Commission and does not accept bets from US residents, they can advertise. In fact, the UK National Lottery advertises on MSN.

Contests are OK to advertise as long as there's no gambling, includes terms & conditions, complies with local state and federal regulations.

## **Pharmacy (including pet pharmacies)**

- Ads ARE allowed for information, over the counter drugs, insurance, medical supplies, healthy and beauty items, vitamins, weight loss aids
- Online pharmacies must be accredited by the NABP VIPPS program or VIPPS, online Canadian pharmacies need CIPA approval.
- Ads are NOT allowed in the UK for any prescription items

## **Adult Advertising Program**

Requires an application with adCenter to participate, but once you're accepted...

- Ads ARE allowed for movies, books, toys, magazines, partial/complete nudity, sex scenes, porno names, porn star names, dating with intent for sexual encounters
- Anyone can advertise for personals, dating, sexual health items/educational info- but links to adult materials must be at least 2 clicks

away from your landing page.

## #3 *Landing Page Relevance and Quality Guidelines (5:21)*

Pretty basic stuff:

- Landing pages must work, not be under construction, not have session specific URLs, no frames or static/dynamic text URLs
- Landing page guidelines CAN vary by country- you'll have to check for yours.
- Landing pages that are restricted or disallowed: all ads sites, misleading sites, must be able to click back, no fake windows, no pop ups, unders or auto downloads. (Pop ups for language and country preferences are OK)
- Landing pages must have a privacy policy stated or clearly linked to on landers that collect information and opt outs must be available.

## #4 *Intellectual Property Guidelines (5:38)*

These are country specific, so again, up to you figure out what country you're in and what not to do.

- No trademarks that “misrepresent”
- Can be a reseller
- Can use a trademark in a informative style- but it must be “truthful & legal.” Basically you can say Nike exploits child workers in Mexico, but you better be able to back it up.
- Can use a competitor’s name if it’s for comparison purposes that has been verified by a 3rd party (just like Google)
- Microsoft does not mediate trademark disputes, you can submit a “concern” online and MS will investigate from there.
- Affiliates! Only one display from a URL will show at a time and the ad with the best CTR is the one that will get shown.

So if you have an affiliate direct linking to your site and their ad is kicking yours in the arse, you are out of luck with MSN. Solve it through the affiliate program.

## Copyrights

- No marketing for products or services that bypass copyright protections.

## Publicity

- No exploiting a public figure or their likeness for commercial gain

## #5 Click Quality (3:15)

- Advertisers are billed for “standard quality” clicks
- Somewhere, adCenter finds “low quality” clicks that are “invalid clicks” and doesn’t bill you for those. They are from users that show low commercial intent, unusual activity or appear to be robots/ test servers.If you want to see how many of those you’ve racked up choose the “low quality clicks” segment to your next adCenter report.
- Legitimate causes of a spike in standard quality clicks are seasonality, sales/discounts, news, trends.
- Report click fraud by sending in the campaign name, ad group name and number, ad identification number, keywords affected and a brief description of the issue.

Whew! That’s it for Part 1: Introduction to Microsoft Ad Center.

# Getting Started

## *Creating an Account (3:58)*

\* \* \*

Takeaway- be sure to have that credit card out and ready- because you won't be able to save your progress and come back later. And of course, pay that \$5 start up fee.

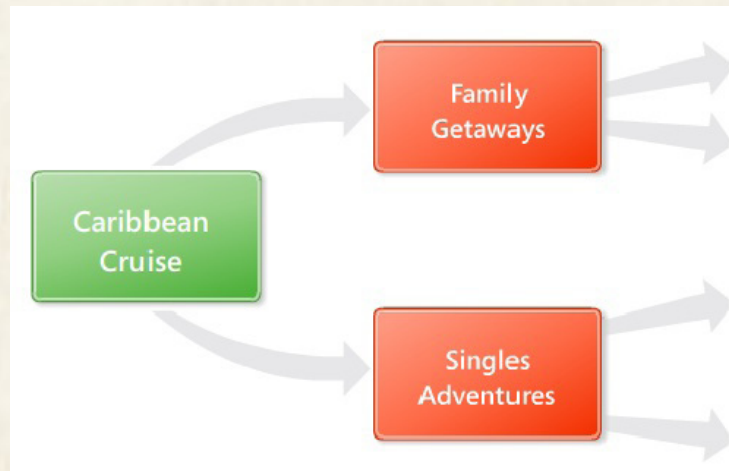
\* \* \*

This section is a quick overview on how to set up a MSN adCenter account and advises you to view the other tutorials that actually walk you through step by step on account creation. You have to enter billing information when starting a new account. The listed "benefit" of doing it this way is that you'll be getting a full tour/view of what the adCenter interface is like and how to use it before completing sign up. Takeaway- be sure to have that credit card out and ready- because you won't be able to save your progress and come back later. And of course, pay that \$5 start up fee.

Other things to notate about this, during the set up you can send invitations to new users to be added to have access for your account including inviting an agency if you are being managed by one. You will need the agencies' adCenter customer number and email address to invite them and they must be an admin on that account invited in.

## Introduction to Campaigns and Ad Groups (3:59)

This section explains what the relationship is between a campaign and ad group using the travel industry as an example. Then again with a fake person and their toy store site- note that a campaign name cannot exceed 100 characters and that you must set a preferred time zone for the account before creating your first campaign.



- Conversion tracking is introduced here as well, the benefits of it and that most importantly, that the time zone setting for the account can be overridden at the campaign level. So make sure when you set those campaign level time zones that they match up where needed.
- Know the targeting setting options: geographic, days of the week, hours of the day, demographics (age, gender)
- Set incremental bids- users are directed to see the targeting ads tutorial.
- Users are encouraged to add negative keywords and websites
- Ad Group names can be up to 60 characters long and have the ability to have start and end dates.

## Choosing Keywords (3:03)

We start here with a definition of what keywords are and that the maximum length of a keywords is 100 characters.

- A quick walkthrough on how to add or delete keywords.
- Introduction to the keyword tools offered by adCenter. Specifically how to generate keywords through the keywords tab and “add to keywords” list feature.
- Search by Keywords tools where you can search by URL or keywords. Then sort by number of searches, CTR, average CPC and click on the individual keywords to add to your list.
- Match types and bidding are stated to be covered elsewhere in the training materials.
- Additional tools mentioned: preview tool, desktop editor, Excel plugin and adCenter labs.

## Introducing Dynamic Text (3:05)

This section explains what dynamic text is and the parameters like character limits and adding default text. *This is one of the few sections you should watch in it's entirety.*



- If your ad/keyword list is going to exceed character limits and you did not set appropriate default text, you'll see warning about this in the user interface under the status column.
- To add dynamic text, just click "add dynamic text" and select which type and add defaults. Know what the difference is between keyword and param 1, 2, and 3 are and how to enter them with defaults into the user interface.
- Always put good default text in for either option.
- Adding {keyword} even if you add capitalization like {Keyword} won't make it show in caps. It'll be all lowercase unless the keyword itself is capitalized in the keyword list like "Ford." Don't forget that this populates with a specific keyword from your list- unlike param.
- Param will populate with what the user actually typed in. If the query is too long, it'll populate with the default text.

## *Writing an Effective Ad (5:12)*

This section goes over the ad section and components.

- Text ads: 25 characters for headline, 70 for the body, 35 for the display URL and 1,022 for the destination URL.

- Mobile ads: 18 headline, 18 body, 10 for the phone number and 20 for the business name.
- No profanity, misleading or trademark violations- go read the Editorial Guidelines section again, it's just a re-hash of that.
- Stressing how the ads need to be relevant, specific and use action words. Highlight benefits, features.
- Ads “shouldn’t” use superlatives or sales language.
- You will not be notified via email of approved or disapproved statuses of ads.

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\* \* \*

Know that the file formats accepted for import are CSV and XLS.

\* \* \*

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## *Importing Campaigns, Ads & Keywords (2:39)*

Walks you through using the “easy campaign import wizard” from the dashboard go to the tools page.

- Click browse to see the supported file formats: Yahoo Web UI Export, Google AdWords Editor Export, Google AdWords Performance Report, adCenter Desktop Editor Export and the adCenter Web UI Import Template.
- Know that the file formats accepted for import are CSV and XLS.
- Download the supported file format and confirming matching, validate the columns and run a “compatibility check” with the import

wizard. If there are errors you can fix them now, import or later there's the "resolve issues" screen where you can fix issues, modify and apply based on what is in the error field descriptions. This is all dependent on how screwed up (or not) your import is turning out to be.

- There are required fields for time zone, campaign and monthly budget when importing campaigns.
- If importing ads, use the Excel template and make sure the ad info is not only correct, but in the correct order. (Ad title, ad text, display URL, destination URL.)
- If importing keywords, again use the Excel template file so that the required fields are there and in the right order (keyword, excluded keywords, match type, destination URL and dynamic text.)

That's it for part 2- stay tuned for part 3: Targeting!

# Targeting

Ready to move on to Targeting? This one is a short one, but it's an important one, so here we go, one step closer to taking the adExcellence exam!

## *Targeting (3:24)*

Targeting has several optional features that will make your campaigns more effective like geo-targeting, day of the week, hours of the day, gender and age.



- Specifically on geo-targeting the USA, UK, Canada and France have the capability to target by country, region, state/province, metro areas, cities/towns. Also mentioned was that the country of Singapore can only be targeted by the whole country.
- A user's time zone is determined by IP lookup.
- Targeting can be set at campaign and ad group levels, if you set targeting at the ad group level, it will override the campaign settings.
- Incremental bids are glossed over in this section as in you can do them and the example showed a 50% increase. Not the best example...

## *Keyword Match Options (6:06)*

If you're a seasoned PPC veteran, there's nothing new here- definitions of the types, examples of what will show and what won't and how to edit match types in the adCenter interface.

- Broad, Phrase, Exact and Negative matches available.
- Broad is the setting by default and will show for synonyms. Meant to reach a wider audience.
- Phrase is to "help prevent ads from being displayed for irrelevant keyword variations."
- Exact is to lower costs, has fewer impressions and a higher CTR.
- Can bid differently for the different match types.

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\* \* \*

The syndicated search partner network is not addressed in any of these tutorial videos

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\* \* \*

## *Content Ads (5:02)*

Content ads are only available in the US and ads are placed on "high quality websites" owned by Microsoft. The 3rd slide in the video deck is a long list of sites included in the content network. And for those that didn't know Facebook is included in that list.

- You can do negative keywords and negative websites.

- You can set this at the ad group level.
- You can bid differently for specific sites or as an ad group.
- Website exclusions is key if you do a keyword based content ads. There's a step by step walk through on how to add these.
- The pros listed for using content ads were: improve ROI, reach potential new customers, boost brand exposure, enhance existing campaigns.
- The "update for best position" feature is introduced here and how to do it.
- If you enable "Networks and Websites" over keywords, you'll be able to choose between specific websites you type in or the "Microsoft Media Network" (which is the only option) and goes to MS properties and publisher sites that will bring "high exposure." It is recommended to use targeting in conjunction with this to narrow the audience you're reaching out to.
- Content network serves only text ads.

# Tracking Ad Performance

Moving on the part 4 in the Microsoft adExcellence Exam series, we explore the Tracking Ad Performance section. After this, you're more than half way there!

## *Microsoft Adcenter Reports (3:22)*

This section just explains where to find the reporting features and what kinds of reports where are.

- There are 3 types of reports: Delivery, Budget and Targeting.
- Set basic settings, then do optional advanced settings for additional accounts, columns and layout.
- Create templates and schedule them if desired. Report email is generated and sent to you with a link- which means you need to login to adCenter to review it.
- The report center holds the 20 most recent run.
- "Rich visual charts" and tables are the benefits of these reports for ac-

count optimization and effectiveness.

## *Where is my adCenter Ad? (14:54)*

### Delivery reports provide performance statistics about:

- Accounts
- Campaigns
- Ad groups
- Ads
- Keywords
- Dynamic text
- Destination URL
- Website placement
- Publisher placement
- Audience segment
- Search query

This one is pretty epic in size. It's basically the video they'd like everyone to watch before calling the 1-800 number for help and goes over several scenarios in which you might not see your ad and what to do if so.

- The process is: ad submitted, ad reviewed, ad approved, ad goes live.
- If the ad is not approved there is an email notice. Be sure to wait a "few hours" after submittal before checking to see if you ad is live or not yet.

Know these reasons on why you might not see your ads:

- Quality based ad rank is lower than competitor's ads
- Minimum ad performance threshold isn't being met
- Targeting options not correct
- Daily/monthly budget has been reached
- Ad group/campaign has passed its end date



Campaigns in selected account

Performance data for: This month Start 11/1/2009 End 11/24/2009 OK

Create campaign Resume Pause Delete More Select columns

<input type="checkbox"/>	Campaign	Ad groups	Monthly budget	Status	Spend	Clicks	Impressions	CTR%	Avg. position	Conversions	Avg. CPC	Negative keywords			
<input type="checkbox"/>	Fall holidays	1	1,000.00	Budget Pause	250.00	22	208	11.05	2.86	Off (Enable)	0.36	None			
<input type="checkbox"/>	Spring holidays	1	1,000.00	Active	400.00	8	100	8.05	3.42	Off (Enable)	0.42	None			
<input type="checkbox"/>	Summer holidays	1	2,000.00	Paused	125.00	15	126	9.60	2.03	Off (Enable)	0.22	None			
<input type="checkbox"/>	Winter holidays	2	2,500.00	Active	0.00	0	0	0.00	0.00	Off (Enable)	0.00	None			
Total - all 4 campaigns					-	-	-	725.00	45	434	9.56	2.77	6	0.33	-

- Use the ad preview tool to see ads before they are live.

Then we dive a little deeper on the above reasons for not being able to find your ad.

- Check for impressions- if the “data summary table” on the user interface dashboard is blank, run a delivery report to see if the account/campaign/ad group in question has registered any impressions.
- Improve your quality based ad rank- the basic answer to this one is to increase bids. You can do an update of performance estimates and see if upping the bid will assist with the problem or not.
- Search queries- if you’re bidding on exact, consider changing the match type to increase impressions.

- Targeting- check the time, geography, language first. Bing users are displayed to and grouped by IP address, along with language settings.
- If the account has zero impressions- check that the account status is active and that the credit card is also active. If a credit card is rejected, it is tried 3 times total and then if unsuccessful, goes on credit hold. To undo this, add a different credit card or call adCenter support. This type of incident will show up in the alerts panel on the dashboard.
- Several times through out the video they mentioned to make sure that something isn't deleted, or set to pause like a credit card, account or keyword list. This must be a common issue.
- Budget pause occurs when your campaign has spent more or is spending more than allowed to stay on track for the monthly budget. To remove a budget pause, increase the budget to 20% more and the campaign with restart. The cycle will begin anew again on the first of the following month with the new budget in place.
- If anything is expired, deleted, paused, disapproved or draft- it won't show.

Performance data for: This month Start

Monthly budget	Status	Spend	Clicks	Impressions	CTR%
1,000.00	Budget Pause	250.00	22	208	11.05
1,000.00	Active	400.00	8	100	8.05
2,000.00	Paused	125.00	15	126	9.60
2,500.00	Active	0.00	0	0	0.00
-	-	725.00	45	434	9.56

## Editorial Review (11:30)

Another whopper of a video- but this is one of the few worth the watch. I wish they would actually take out some of the great graphs/charts they

have in here and put them in the Help Center.

- If there is an editorial issue as you are creating ads etc; an “inline editorial guidelines” popup box will list out what the issues are.
- There is a rehash of the disapproved notifications, where they are and what is emailed and what isn’t.
- There is a great chart for Table of Editorial Review that has descriptions of editorial issues and solutions to solve them.
- In the user interface, look to the ads and keyword status columns to see feedback and a flyout box to click and see links on how to fix the issue being flagged.
- Items that can fail editorial review pertain to style, grammar, punctuation, misspellings and disallowed characters like - [ ] @ \* < = >. The takeaway tip is that if you’re going to bid on misspellings with dynamic text use the param function over the keyword one.
- Know that abbreviations are OK as long as they are common usage.
- Phone numbers are not allowed in title or text unless it’s part of the company name.
- Appealing a disapproval- go to the Help Page in adCenter and click “more help” to get support via email or phone.
- Support can take up to 10 business days.

## Ad Content and Style Guidelines

To help ensure that your ads and keywords are approved quickly, follow the guidelines listed here. If your ad or keyword was disapproved, you can update it according to the appropriate guideline and then resubmit it for approval.

### Style Guidelines

General ad text guidelines  
 Capitalization  
 Grammar  
 Phone numbers for mobile ads  
 Punctuation  
 Spelling  
 Symbols and special characters  
 Word count and character limits

### Content Guidelines

Duplicate ads  
 Misleading ads  
 Use of foreign language

### URLs and Landing Pages

Destination URL  
 Display URL  
 Landing page  
 Site behavior and navigation

- If the disapproved goes through the request for exception and is denied twice, the decision is final and cannot be appealed again.

## *Campaign Analytics (12:18)*

So I forgot to watch this one before I took the test. I still passed easily, so that should give you some insight...plus the tutorial breaks after slide #6-9, which if you sit and wait for a full minute, it comes back in, for each slide, unfortunately. It does pick up the regular load time for slides 10-11 though. (Yes, I tried viewing in Firefox and IE.) AND also unfortunately- if you are planning on utilizing their analytics this is a video you should watch from start to finish.

- The first few slides are selling points on why you analytics are important (to measure ROI).
- Definitions of conversion, conversion tracking, analytics, tracking code.
- Where/how to “enable” tracking (check the checkbox for starters) where MSN will generate the tracking code.
- If you click the “limit to individual campaign conversions only” the system won’t track what they call “additional stats” like revenue and cost. This option must also be enabled manually for each campaign that you want it to apply to.

- NOT checking the “limit” checkbox means that the tracking option will apply to all campaigns in the account.

## Creating Goals

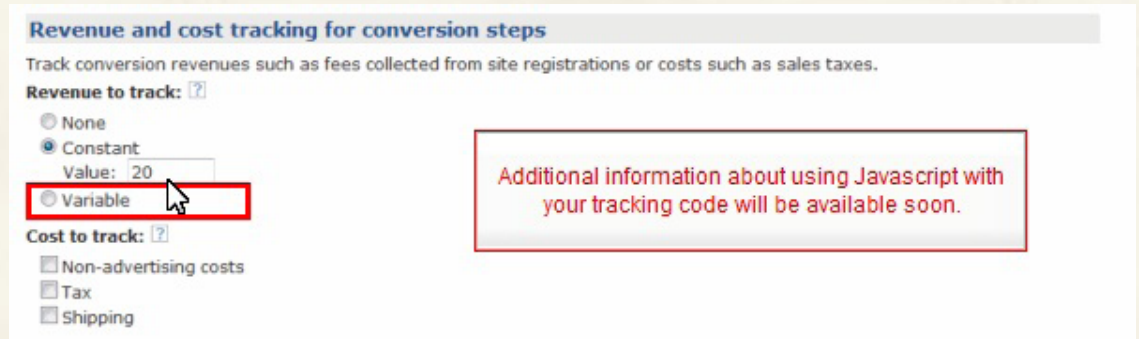
- Click “create goal” and name it appropriately (like purchase or sign up). A goal can have up to 6 steps to get to the goal, the only required step is the conversion step.
- There are 3 types of steps:
  - **Land-** of which there can only be one per goal, it’s the page where the visitor lands.
  - **Browse-** there can be up to 5 of these, they are the pages visitors pass through on their way to a specific page.
  - **Prospect-** a page that a visitor visits that indicates a conversion is likely- i.e. placing an item in a shopping cart. There can be up to 5 prospect steps.

## Revenue and cost tracking for conversion steps

This is where you assign revenue/cost values for the steps. There are three types: none, constant and variable. Do not put in any currency symbols.

**Constant-** is when your value for the conversion stays the same, like a fee, a single product etc; When you run the report for goals, the system takes this value as the sale value and multiplies that by the number of conversions for total revenue.

**Variable-** this one requires Javascript knowledge. And I quote “write a Javascript function to return the transaction amount then call it from the tracking code generated for your webpage.”



**Revenue and cost tracking for conversion steps**

Track conversion revenues such as fees collected from site registrations or costs such as sales taxes.

**Revenue to track:** ?

None  
 Constant  
 Value: 20  
 Variable

**Cost to track:** ?

Non-advertising costs  
 Tax  
 Shipping

Additional information about using Javascript with your tracking code will be available soon.

**Cost to Track-** Again, you need to complete this for it to work- add specific costs (like shipping or tax) to the tracking code or as Javascript functions.

**Conversion Period-** is a set number of days you can choose from the drop down for the sales cycle.

Once everything has been selected/setup, save, generate code by picking a step (example: conversion step code to paste into the receipt page). And yes, you need to select each step, generate the code and go paste onto the appropriate page on your website.

An ACCOUNT can have up to 6 goals.

### Adding Custom Report Dimensions

“Custom report dimensions allow you to track the performance of ad campaigns served through third party services.” As in, other search en-

gines- but you have to append all destination URLs with dimension parameters.

Dimensions:

- Tactic (affiliate, email, ppc- a/k/a medium)
- Channel (Google, Facebook- a/k/a source)
- 3rd Party Campaign (whatever the name of the campaign is)
- 3rd Party Ad Group (the ad group name)
- 3rd Party Term (term that generated the visit)

**Create goal**  
To define your goal, create each step in the goal, and then click **Save and generate code**.

**Goal settings**

Goal name:

Step 1 name:  Type: Land

Step 2 name:  Type: Browse

Step 3 name:  Type: Prospect

Conversion step name:

**Custom report dimensions** ?

Add key and value pairs to track website data from ads served through non-Microsoft network websites.

[Add custom dimension](#) ?

You have not added any custom dimensions.  
To add a custom dimension click **Add custom dimension**.

Dimension:

Key:  Key represents the dimension in the URL query string "key=value". If "chn" is the key then "chn" would replace "key" in the related query string. 20 characters maximum.

Values:

To add a key value, enter the name and its value separated by \*\*. For example, if the name is "Microsoft" and its value is "M", type **Microsoft\*\*M**. Once you click **Save**, you cannot delete a name and its value.

Values

There are no keys for this dimension.  
To get started, add key values in the text box above.

- Enter a “key” to represent the dimension (i.e chnl for channel)
- Set value by entering the name of the value\*\*the value and then append to the destination URL. So as in the screenshot, the Microsoft Media Network is classified as a channel by the abbreviation MMN and expressed as &chnl=MMN

The screenshot shows a configuration interface for a dimension. The 'Dimension' dropdown is set to 'Channel'. The 'Key' field contains 'chnl'. The 'Values' list contains 'Microsoft Media Network\*\*MMN'. A red callout box provides an example: 'http://www.contoso.com/vacations/falldiscount.aspx &chnl=MMN'. Below the 'Values' list is an 'Add values' button.

Dimension: Channel

Key: chnl Key represents the dimension in the URL query string "key=value". If "chn" is the key for the channel dimension, then "chn" would replace "key" in the related query string. 20 characters maximum.

Values: Microsoft Media Network\*\*MMN

To add a key value, enter the name and its value. Example: <http://www.contoso.com/vacations/falldiscount.aspx>  
**&chnl=MMN**

Add values

- You can add up to 100 values per dimension
- Once a value is saved it CANNOT be deleted, only edited.

### Campaign Analytics Reports

This section simply explains that there are several reports that will become available to you if you enable tracking in the reporting section:

Goal Reports, Traffic Sources Reports, Segments Reports and Tactics & Channels Reports.



# Optimizing Ad Performance

Moving on to section #5 of the video series, Optimizing Ad Performance, we start to see the light at the end of the tunnel of this video series!

## *Campaign Optimization (6:01)*

### Strategies to improve click-through rates

- Optimize keywords by adding relevant and negative keywords
- Organize each campaign by a theme and make sure included ads and keywords are specific to that theme
- Consider placing more ads in each ad group
- Consider trying dynamic text
- Target your ads to specific groups or times of day

The bottom line of this video is really is how to spend more with MSN and the answer is: increase everything as it pertains to optimization.

The video starts out by defining optimization as it pertains to PPC, encourages you to run performance reports and gives sample scenarios of issues and possible solutions.

For example: high amount of impressions, but a low amount of clicks. The answer being to run some traffic reports and review the detailed data and the following strategy suggestions (*left image*).

Additional example- a toy seller with a low number of impressions, possible causation issues could be:

## Low impressions may be caused by:

- Low relevance
- Disapproved keywords
- Low keyword bids
- Low click-through rate

Just something to note as a direct quote from the video: “Her CTR may be too low for her ads to be displayed.” Meaning that unless people are clicking your ad, your ad could get dinged- even though the base issue to begin with is that there are a low number of impressions to show for.

Users are encouraged to use the Keyword Research and Mutation tools to expand keyword lists.

Additional troubleshooting options for strategies to increase impressions:

Troubleshooting example given for low ROI:

## Strategies to Improve ROI

- Delete expensive or underperforming keywords
- Lower the bids on certain keywords
- Divide ad budget across the month
- Target customers by specific day of the week or time of day

And last, but not least- an underutilized budget. Suggestions being to increase the bid, increase the number of keywords and apply targeted bidding. Using the keyword bid estimator for bid estimates, keyword tool to add keywords and targeted bidding to increase exposure to more searchers.

## *Ad Optimization Best Practices (8:04)*

MSN recommends when testing your ads, you need to have at least 3 ads per ad group running. They also recommend that you allow 3 weeks to allow the ad group to gather enough data before changing anything or 1,000 impressions, whichever comes first.

Ad testing tactics should address your audience, business type, product or service and your specific needs.

Now please enjoy this chart of ad copy elements that you could be testing which seems include staring off in the distance as a tactic:



MSN asks you to consider your advertising goals- advertisers with branding goals are driving for impressions, where advertisers with ROI goals, hinge on CTR metrics (this assumes that you don't have analytics within the adCenter interface going and will be using only the available stats to work with).

Delete poor performing ads (don't forget to check your ad position first) so that the best performing ads get more impressions. Same goes for bids and ad relevance when determining which ad to delete.

Set up “Succeeding Tests” -where the top performing ad becomes the control and new ad copy is created based on the control with 1 variable.

Know that you should always delete under performing ads and create new ads, rather than editing a poor performing ad. The poorer ad retains the previous ad’s performance history.

Have at least 2 ads in each ad group- preferably one static and one dynamic.

## *Ad Optimization Best Practices (8:04)*

Identify the key elements of ad copy- editorial style, dynamic text, unique selling proposition, branding and calls to action.

There is then a rehash of the editorial guidelines in regards to correct spelling, grammar, language, superlatives and using of common abbreviations and punctuation.

**Dynamic text** is also revisited again in the context of ad best practices, which gave us the statistic for the not so recent study anymore:

**Inserting the exact keyword into a paid listing improves click-through rates by 38% on average.\***

\* According to a recent study by Advertising.com

\*\*\*

Know that you should always delete under performing ads and create new ads, rather than editing a poor performing ad. The poorer ad retains the previous ad’s performance history.

\*\*\*

Know the difference and benefits between keyword insertion vs. parameter insertion.

**Keyword insertion**, inserts the exact keyword into the ad, makes the ad relevant and is easy and immediate.

**Parameter insertion**, customizes the keyword for proper grammar, capitalization, spelling, keeps the ad in character limits and can use different values.

Know the ad limits, 25 characters for title, 70 for the body and to provide default text for dynamic text.

From here, they go into customer profiling, knowing what your customer demographics are, the service/product attributes, brand and the call to action that will attract them. In particular, they mention income, age, gender, location and lifestyle behavior- some of which is tied into demographic and geographic reporting in the research tab and point you to researching your customers through 3rd party market research like industry research reports.

**Unique Selling Points** is the next slide which gives examples for their suggested USPs to feature like: low prices and discounts, special offers, product attributes and customer service (I have to admit the MSN ads in this way are more creative than anything I've seen on Google for examples).

**Calls to Action-** MSN actually mentions “click here” as a generic call to action, but not against the editorial guidelines and encourages users to use more specific calls like buy, join, reserve or subscribe. Including using creative/descriptive words in the ads:

<b>Durable</b> <u>Hiking Boots</u> Hit the trail with rugged, long-wearing men's & women's hiking boots.	<b>Comfortable</b> <u>Quality Bedding</u> Snug sheets, blankets, & pillows surround you with softness. Save 50%.
<b>Distinguished</b> <u>Fine Jewelry</u> World-class gold jewelry & diamond earrings by acclaimed designers.	<b>Appealing</b> <u>Enchanting Resort</u> Exquisite rooms. Stunning views. Get ready for an unforgettable visit.

MSN also covers seasonality for ad copy, but what is more interesting is the recommendation to create a “mirror” ad group for seasonality and instead of pausing non-seasonal ads in an ad group and adding new ones for the duration of the holiday, a totally new ad group with the same keywords, seasonal ad copy and pausing the non-seasonal ad group.

And of course, the inclusion of keywords in the ad copy- particularly mentioning “search query repetition” where the keyword appears in the ad title and body copy.

## Dynamic Text Best Practices (6:39)

This is a bit of a refresher from before, what is dynamic text, where it appears, why you'd use it and character limits. And then they bring up again, the 38% increase in CTR when it's in the ad vs. when it's not.

If you struggle with MSN's dynamic/param text system, I recommend watching at least sides 5, 6 and 7 in this video. This video walks through the different params as well: the destination and keyword level ones. What you really need is this chart to make the distinction on which one to use:

To {keyword} or to {param}?

Method	Pros	Cons
Keyword insertion	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Exact keyword inserted into ad and displayed in a bold typeface.</li> <li>Makes the ad relevant and specific to the search term.</li> <li>Easy and immediate.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Cannot change capitalization.</li> <li>Risk of editorial disapprovals in case of deliberate keyword misspellings or syntax errors.</li> </ul>
Parameter insertion	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Can customize keyword for proper capitalization, spelling and grammar.</li> <li>Helps in staying within the character limitations.</li> <li>Usable for different dynamic values, such as prices and destinations.</li> <li>The 25 {param2} and 70 {param3} character limits allow you to write a full description unique to the keyword within the parameter variables.</li> <li>Allows you to make quick updates to multiple ads.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Need to remember to add parameter values when uploading keywords.</li> <li>Can be time-consuming to create.</li> </ul>



Know that for dynamic insertion to always use relevant placeholder text and that you cannot control capitalization, but you can with params. MSN recommends not using adjectives and verbs as part of a keyword when using dynamic text. If you do want to do that, set up a separate ad group to avoid poorly written looking ads. Like the keyword “cheap car” and an ad with the dynamic headline of “buy cheap {keyword}” coming out like “buy cheap cheap car.”

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\* \* \*

Know that the quickest boost to improve your ad rank is to bid more (yes, throwing money at the problem does help).

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\* \* \*

## *Quality Advertising Experiences (7:21)*

This entire video is basically outlining how not to ruin the Microsoft brand with your crappy or spammy ads as it is the “intent of the MSN AdCenter commitment to quality advertising experiences.”

**Ad Position-** this section seems very out of place in this specific video. It outlines that the ad position factors are bid, quality and CTR performance to decide if your ad goes in the mainline or right rail and in which position. Best practices for improving your ad rank: increase your CPC amount, improve ad copy (with keywords), landing page and match type.

Know that the quickest boost to improve your ad rank is to bid more (yes, throwing money at the problem does help).

The rest of the video is a rehash of products/features already covered but now in the context where MSN asks that your account or ads not be a giant mess and ruin Bing search results. Skip it.

# Budgeting and Billing

## Microsoft adCenter Budgeting (2:08)

This two minute video just goes over the different options: divide across the month or per day or the spend until depleted with definitions.

Daily budget is a “target” and the actual spend will vary and works best if you want to make regular changes to your budget.

Spend until depleted- is what it is.

Divide across the month- daily budget is calculated by AdCenter by total remaining amount/number of days left in the month. This is the one where you can hit a “budget pause” at the end of the month.

## Bidding (2:56)

This section goes over what a max CPC is (which by part 6, you know by now) and how the bidding works in relation to monthly budget and placement on the page where the ad appears in a search result.

SUN	MON	TUES	WED	THU	FRI	SAT
	Divide budget across month option:					
	\$5,000	remaining monthly budget				
	÷ 25	remaining days in month				
	\$200	daily budget				

**Options:** bid by match type, same for all keyword, individual keywords or incremental bids.

**Content network:** set the same bid for all placements or for separate placements.

Use the bid estimation tool- or the bid to position 1 tool to see estimated costs and traffic:

**Bid on keywords** ?

Click **Advanced bidding** and change bids for individual keywords, or enter a default bid for all keywords.

**Default bid (max. CPC)** ?

Search network (USD):

**Estimate default bids needed to reach position 1**

Estimated monthly spend and performance

Spend	Impressions	Clicks	Avg. CTR%	Avg. pos.	Avg. CPC
0.15	221	3	1.36	9.04	0.05

Then the video goes over (again) how to change or update bids after an ad group has been created.

## *Microsoft adCenter Billing (1:50)*

This section goes over specifically how adCenter billing works. Specifically to note when you start your account, that day is your “billing cycle” day. On that day every month your card is charged whatever is outstanding and this day CANNOT be changed.

The billing threshold is assigned per account, per your credit limit- assigned to your account. The credit card threshold starts at \$50, then \$100, \$500, \$1,000 or you can hit that friendly “bill me now” button any time.

So a brand new credit card account will be billed at \$50, then \$100 and so on until you’ve established the credit to go a whole month (if you don’t hit \$1,000) that you’ll be automatically billed on your “billing cycle day.”

PayPal is an accepted form of payment as well and be sure to check your alert panel for any billing issues. You can change to PayPal at any time.

They then go into where to go in your account to see billing statements, your threshold, cycle day, invoice numbers.

## Billing Statements

Review billing statements for your accounts.

Account:    
 Show activity for:

**Billing threshold (USD): 50.00**

**Billing cycle day: 30**

Invoice number	Date	Detail	Charge(USD)
1147758	9/30/2009-10/31/2009	Advertising Costs	
	11/2/2009	Payment Received - Thank you. (Credit card ending with 1234)	
1328302	10/31/2009-11/30/2009	Advertising Costs	
	12/8/2009	Payment Received - Thank you. (Credit card ending with 1234)	

Since they actually threw this last slide in as “key points to remember” I put it in here as well:

## Remember

- The day you set up your adCenter account becomes your billing cycle day
- Billing dates cannot be changed
- Your credit card or PayPal account is charged monthly, based on your billing threshold and your monthly billing date



# adCenter Desktop Editor

FINALLY, the last installment of the MSN AdCenter Exam series- having to do with the adCenter Desktop Editor. It's been a long haul, but from what I understand there are some of you out there that got some value out of the series. So I thank you for staying tuned and staying with me.

Just so you know- not a single question came up (for me anyway) on the exam regarding this section. If you're looking to save yourself 40mins, this is a good place to do it. (It is listed as Beta after all.) If you don't know how to use the Desktop tool- this is a good resource to view.

## *Microsoft adCenter Desktop Overview (5:11)*

This section shows you how to install and navigate the user interface and what it is, why you would want it.

Find the link for the download under the Tools tab in your adCenter account, click on it, download, run and follow the installation wizard.

Open the account from your desktop, sign in with your adCenter login (click remember me- so you don't have to keep logging in) and off you go.

The tutorial then goes through all the items on the “Task based ribbon” summarizing what the Home, Manage and Research tabs can do.

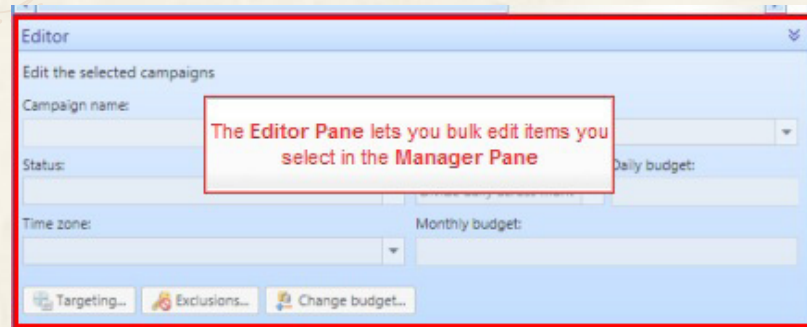
The screenshot displays the Microsoft adCenter Desktop (Beta) interface. The 'Home' tab is highlighted in the top ribbon. A callout box points to the Home tab with the text: "The Home tab lets you synchronize accounts, import and export data and download performance statistics." The main window shows a list of keywords in the 'Manager' tab, with columns for Keyword, Status, Bid, Match type, Spend, CTR, and Impressions. The 'Editor' tab is also visible at the bottom.

S...	V...	Keyword	Status	Bid	Match type	Spend	CTR (%)	Impressions
		jean blanc	Active	5.00	Broad			
		jean bleu	Active	5.00	Broad			
		jean coupe classi...	Active	5.00	Broad			
		jean coupe décon...	Active	5.00	Broad			
		jean coupe droite	Active	5.00	Broad			
		jean court	Active	5.00	Broad			
		jean long	Active	5.00	Broad			
		jean noir	Active	5.00	Broad			
		jupe jean	Active	5.00	Broad			
		pantalon jean	Active	5.00	Broad			



To filter- select View and choose from the drop down list. This is also where you can do multiple changes or advanced copy and paste.

The Editor Pane is the pane below Manager where you can change details like budget, targeting, exclusions, dates, bids, find/replace feature.



The Dashboard- on the far right sidebar – is where you can save your “favorite campaigns and ad groups.” I barely looked at this.

### *Account Basics (8:17)*

Skip the first 4 slides, it’s just a rehash of what it is and what the “learning objectives” will be.

Subscribing to account shows you how to add accounts and to “sync” them (as few or as a many at a time) so that your Editor uploads the newest information from your adCenter account. Watch for the size of data expected to be uploaded...

Sync up whatever account it is you're going to be working first... then

The screenshot shows the Microsoft adCenter Manager interface. The 'Conflicts' view is active, displaying a table of keyword conflicts. A red callout box highlights the 'Version' column, indicating that users should select the version of the data they want to keep. The table lists conflicts between Client and Server versions for keywords like 'Connecticut' and 'Cape Cod'.

Client	Server	Version	Keyword	Status	Match type	Bid	Destination URL	Placeholder
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Client	Connecticut	Active	Broad	0.50		
	<input type="checkbox"/>	Server	Connecticut	Active	Content	0.05		
	<input type="checkbox"/>	Server	Connecticut	Active	Broad	1.00		
	<input type="checkbox"/>	Server	Connecticut	Active	Content	0.05		
	<input type="checkbox"/>	Client	Cape Cod	Active	Broad	0.50		
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Client	Cape Cod	Active	Content	0.05		
	<input type="checkbox"/>	Server	Cape Cod	Active	Broad	1.00		
	<input type="checkbox"/>	Server	Cape Cod	Active	Content	0.05		

The tutorial then goes through all the different symbols and what the different fonts and colors means. For example a strikethrough is something that is deleted, same with the black "X" mark. Look for green plus signs, black X, red X, italics and bold fonts.

Notifications Stacks are shown when the manager pane is set to All- and will prevent you from syncing all changes and needs to be remedied. Basically it's a list of errors you have to address in order to move on.

### *Exporting and Importing (6:22)*

Specifically how to import and export Google AdWords files to adCenter Desktop.

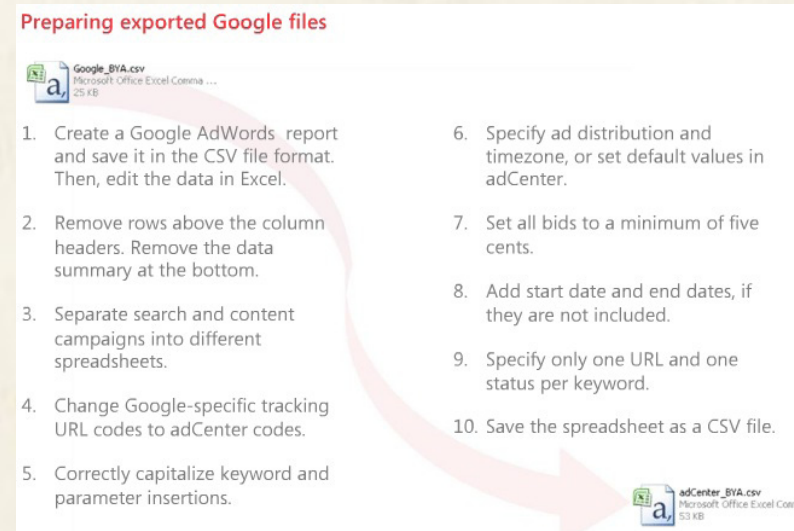
The acceptable file formats are CSV, Tab delimited and Excel Workbooks.

Export AdCenter data by right clicking the item to be exported and click “Export” along with where to save the file.

Export Google AdWords data and save as a CSV- edit in Excel.

What you really need to know:

**Preparing exported Google files**



1. Create a Google AdWords report and save it in the CSV file format. Then, edit the data in Excel.
2. Remove rows above the column headers. Remove the data summary at the bottom.
3. Separate search and content campaigns into different spreadsheets.
4. Change Google-specific tracking URL codes to adCenter codes.
5. Correctly capitalize keyword and parameter insertions.
6. Specify ad distribution and timezone, or set default values in adCenter.
7. Set all bids to a minimum of five cents.
8. Add start date and end dates, if they are not included.
9. Specify only one URL and one status per keyword.
10. Save the spreadsheet as a CSV file.

Setting default values for your adCenter account- go to the big red Desktop button and click Desktop Options- Advanced- under Campaigns/ Ad Groups etc; set the default options you want applied when importing. THIS will save you a lot of time if you are importing multiple campaigns/ adgroups.

## Importing Campaigns

Click Import- use the Import Wizard, select the source from where the file will come. Google, Yahoo, AdCenter or Excel spreadsheet.

Once the file is uploaded, select the appropriate columns above the imported data.

## *Account Management Top Tips (7:05)*

First up, 3 slides of introduction that you should skip.

**1st tip-** Copy and Paste. Like campaigns, right click, copy and paste into the account where you want them to go. Everything is copied- and applies to ad groups, ads, keywords etc;

**2nd tip-** Multiple Changes wizard- example of creating and editing keyword list, highlight keywords, click copy to Excel, make changes in Excel, copy the keyword data, open the wizard and select the ad group destination. Paste the data into the wizard. When you paste, it'll grab the headers from Excel as well, see "The first row contains column headings" box.

**3rd tip-** Find and Replace. Click the Replace button, change the word you

want to change in Find and then replacement text. Be sure to select what ads etc; you want to perform this on so that it's in the Manager pane so the Find/Replace can work it's magic.

**4th tip-** Opt into Match Types- adding match types to your current keyword list, select the keywords, right click and select which match type to add for those keywords.

**5th tip-** Advanced Search and Filter- Click "Advanced" and chose from the drop down menu that you want to filter by (so match type for example) select filter (like exact or contains) and then you can add an "Add Criteria" if needed to add additional filters.

## Desktop Customization (4:50)

How to set default values (which we already went over), date ranges, defaults and columns.

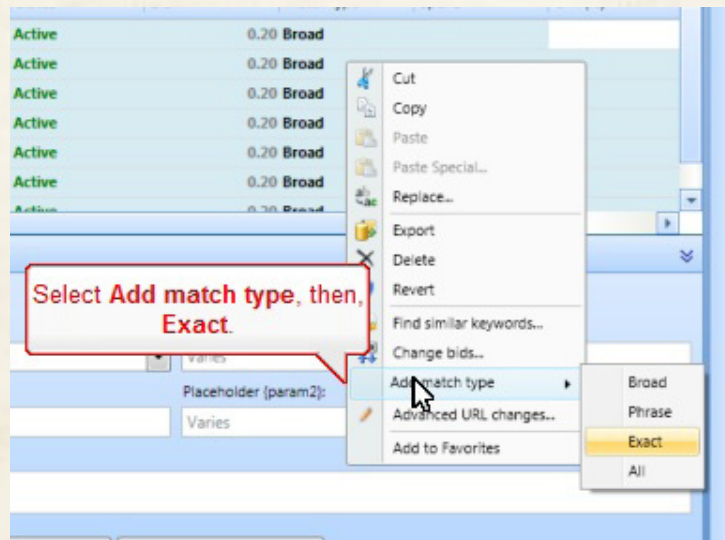
Default values- set through the red AdCenter Desktop Button- as we went over Exporting & Importing but with more screenshots.

Default keyword bids- at the ad group level- basically the max CPC for the ad group. They're just calling it something else.

Type	Status	CampaignName	AdGroupName	Keyword	MatchType	Bid
Campaign	Paused	Margies travel				
Ad Group	Active	Margies travel	Florida			
Text Ad	Active	Margies travel	Florida			
Text Ad	Active	Margies travel	Florida			
Keyword	Active	Margies travel	Florida	Florida	Phrase	0.00
Keyword	Active	Margies travel	Florida	Florida	Content	0.00
Keyword	Active	Margies travel	Florida	Mexico	Broad	0.00
Keyword	Active	Margies travel	Florida	Mexico	Content	0.00
Keyword	Active	Margies travel	Florida	trips	Broad	0.00
Keyword	Active	Margies travel	Florida	trips	Content	0.00
Keyword	Active	Margies travel	Florida	tropical	Broad	0.00
Keyword	Active	Margies travel	Florida	tropical	Content	0.00
Keyword	Active	Margies travel	Florida	vacations	Broad	0.00
Keyword	Active	Margies travel	Florida	vacations	Content	0.00
Keyword	Active	Margies travel	Florida	winter holidays	Broad	0.00

Manager columns- arrange which columns show. Click Columns in the Manager pane and select what columns you want.

Custom date ranges- Click the date range button and select Custom (the last custom date range you ran is held here until you run another). Unfortunately it's still limited to a max of 31 consecutive days, no more than 2 years in the past. Click download statistics.



## *Desktop Campaign Optimization (9:04)*

I see the light at the end of this tunnel....last one.

**Research tab-** Group of keyword tools to expand: similar, extracted, frequent and category. Demographic tools for traffic, age and gender. And the keyword bids estimation tool.

**Keyword Generation Tools-** select a group or ad group of keywords and start clicking tools depending on what you're after: Similar Keywords- displays a list of terms similar to a word or phrase you enter.

**Extracted Keywords-** displays a list of keywords from a webpage URL you enter.

**Frequent Keywords-** displays a list of terms that were most frequently used in search queries during the previous month.

**Category Keywords**- displays a list of terms associated with a business category you select.

Tutorial then walks through using the similar keywords tool. It's pretty self explanatory- but does provide impression data as well, select and add to ad group. It is nice that you can select WHERE from a drop down menu of where the terms will go, ad group, ad group or campaign negatives.

Flip around keyword generation tools from the drop down menu while conducting all your research.

Keyword	Impressions (last month)
Similar keywords	
Extracted keywords	3477
Frequent keywords	
Category keywords	93
<input type="checkbox"/> bayside marina	28
<input type="checkbox"/> canoe	
<input type="checkbox"/> canoe trip	
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> kayaking trips	97
<input type="checkbox"/> anchorage marina	44
<input type="checkbox"/> atlantic kayak tours	6
<input type="checkbox"/> boat yard	130
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> boating	4181

It then continues on to each kind and how to use the generation tool. If you've used this before at all - skip this part.

**Keyword Intelligence Tools Monthly Traffic-** display the number of times each keyword was used as a search term for the previous three months.

**Age Demographic-** displays the percentage of total searches on each keyword made by people in six age ranges.

**Gender Demographic-** displays the percentage of searches on keywords made by males and females (and people of unreported gender).

### Keyword Bid Estimation Tool

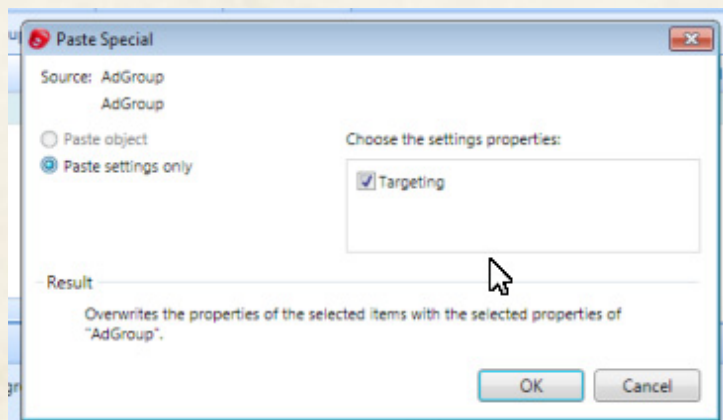
Select one or more keywords in the manager pane, click the estimation tool button, see positions 1-3 with the corresponding bid to attain that position.

### Bulk Targeting

Select multiple campaigns in the manager pane, click “targeting” in the editing pane and go to town on the edits you want to make (they also show how to apply incremental bidding as well). Click OK.

### Copying Targeting

Select campaign you want to copy, right click, copy and select campaign that you want copy targeting for. Right click, paste special. In the paste settings box check the radio button for what you want to paste.





# THE END

This means you are now ready to take the MSN AdExcellence exam!

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Professional



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