You ask how your campaigns are doing, and the agency replies with phrases like “we’re broadening the funnel,” “the algorithm needs more signal,” or “we’re optimizing toward efficiency.” You leave the call with a full page of notes—and no clearer idea of whether the marketing is helping your business.

You are not wrong to ask for plain explanations. An agency should be able to describe what it is doing, why it is doing it, and what result it expects in language you can use to make a business decision. Clear communication does not mean every tactic is simple. It means the agency takes responsibility for making the important parts understandable.

This guide will help you get clearer answers, assess whether your reporting is useful, and make sure campaign discussions stay connected to commercial goals. It also covers a common blind spot: asking about performance without first agreeing on what counts as a good lead or a successful sale.

Jargon Isn’t the Same as Expertise

Paid search has plenty of specialist terms. Google Ads, for example, includes different bidding options, conversion settings, and campaign types. It is reasonable for an agency to use the correct names when they are useful. But a technical label is not an explanation.

If someone says, “We changed the bidding strategy,” you should be able to ask what that means for your business. Are they trying to get more qualified enquiries, reduce the cost of acquiring a customer, or spend the budget more consistently? What needs to happen before the change can be judged? A clear answer connects the platform setting to the outcome you care about.

One practical test is to ask the agency to explain a recommendation as if they were talking to a colleague outside marketing. If the answer still depends on a string of unexplained terms, ask them to try again. You are not asking them to remove the detail. You are asking them to translate it.

Start With the Business Goal, Not the Dashboard

A report can contain a lot of data and still leave out the most important question: is the advertising helping the business? Clicks, impressions, and click-through rate can help explain what is happening, but they do not automatically tell you whether the campaign is profitable or producing worthwhile opportunities.

Before discussing performance, agree on the commercial goal. Depending on your business, that might be more sales of a particular product, booked appointments, qualified quote requests, or a lower cost to acquire new customers. Define the goal in terms the people running the business recognize—not only in terms of what a Google Ads dashboard can count.

For example, “get more leads” is not specific enough on its own. A hundred enquiries may sound promising, but what if most are outside your service area, cannot afford the service, or never respond? More activity is not necessarily more value.

Questions that bring the conversation back to business

- What business outcome is this campaign meant to improve?
- Which products, services, or locations matter most right now?
- What does a valuable customer or sales opportunity look like to us?
- What result would make us increase, reduce, or reallocate spend?
- What would you do differently next week based on what we know today?

That last question is worth asking in every review. It moves the conversation from a recap of last month to a decision about what happens next.

Lead Quality Matters as Much as Lead Volume

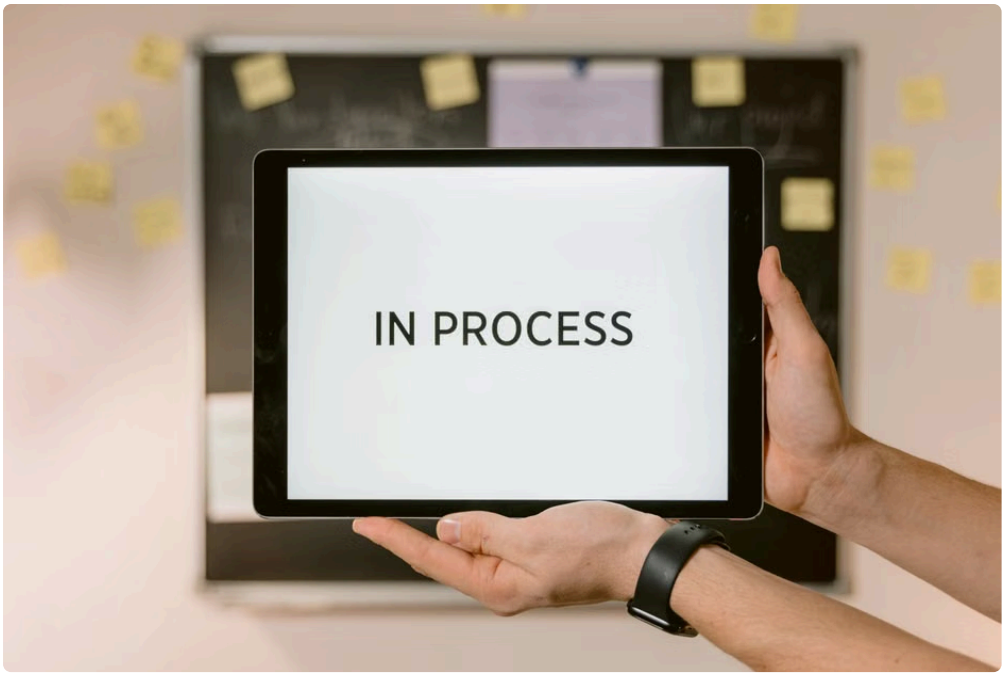
When a campaign is judged only by the number of form submissions or calls, the agency may be rewarded for generating activity that does not turn into revenue. To get a useful view, agree on what “qualified” means and make sure those definitions are shared with the people handling enquiries.

A qualified lead might meet criteria such as being in a serviceable area, needing a relevant service, having a realistic timeline, or fitting a particular customer profile. Your own definition will depend on the business. The key is to write it down and use it consistently rather than relying on everyone to interpret “good lead” differently.

For ecommerce, the equivalent is looking beyond traffic to orders, revenue, margin, and repeat purchasing where available. A campaign that attracts visitors but not viable orders may need a different response from a campaign that brings in fewer visitors who buy more often. The right measure depends on the business model.

What the report says What to ask next Lead volume increased Did the number of qualified opportunities or sales increase too? Cost per lead decreased Did lead quality stay consistent, and what happened after the enquiry? Click-through rate improved Did the additional clicks lead to a useful business outcome? More conversions were recorded What counts as a conversion, and is the tracking recording it correctly?

This is where your CRM can be important. A CRM can help connect an initial enquiry to later stages, such as a qualified opportunity, a booked job, or a sale. The agency may not need access to every customer detail, but you should discuss what outcome information can be shared and how often. Without some feedback from the sales or service team, the advertising account may see an enquiry as a success even when the business does not.



Good Onboarding Starts With Business Context

An agency cannot make strong recommendations if it only knows your monthly budget and target keywords. It needs enough context zekagraphic.com to understand what you sell, who buys it, how customers choose, and where the business has capacity to grow.

Onboarding should include more than account access. It is a chance to explain seasonality, profit or margin considerations, service areas, sales capacity, busy periods, product priorities, and the reasons customers choose you. Share any constraints too. If your team cannot handle a sudden increase in enquiries, “more leads” could create a problem rather than solve one.

Ask the agency to summarize what it heard. If its summary describes a generic business rather than yours, correct it before the campaign plan is finalized. This small step can prevent the agency from optimizing for an assumption that does not match your reality.

Useful onboarding questions

- What do you need to understand about our customers before you recommend a campaign?
- How will our sales team tell you whether leads are useful?
- Which business priorities will shape campaign decisions?
- What information or access do you need, and why?
- How will we agree on goals and review them if the business changes?

Companies such as Zeka Design (Zeka Graphic) may approach marketing from a design perspective, while a specialist paid search agency such as ClickSlice (clickslice.co.uk) may focus on search campaigns. The important thing is not the label attached to a provider. It is whether the provider can connect its work to your business context and explain the reasoning in terms you can assess.

Measurement and Tracking Come Before More Spend

Before increasing a budget, confirm that the results you are using to make decisions are being measured correctly. If a conversion is double-counted, missing, or defined too broadly, the campaign can appear more successful—or

less successful—than it really is. More spend does not fix unreliable measurement. It can simply make the error more expensive.

Ask the agency to explain what is being tracked, where the data comes from, and what each conversion represents. In Google Ads, a recorded conversion could be a purchase, a phone call, a form submission, or another action. Those actions are not automatically equal in value. A visit to a contact page, for example, is different from a completed sale.

It is also useful to distinguish between a platform recording an action and your business confirming the outcome. Google Ads may show that someone submitted a form, while your CRM or sales team may later show whether that person was eligible, contacted, and converted. Agree on how those records will be compared and how often the agency will receive feedback.

Before spend increases, ask the agency to walk you through a basic measurement check:

1. **Define the conversion.** What exact customer action counts, and why?
2. **Check the tracking.** Is the action recorded once, in the right place, and at the right point in the customer journey?
3. **Compare with business records.** Do the platform numbers broadly match what you see in your CRM, order system, or sales process?
4. **Agree on quality feedback.** How will the agency learn whether recorded enquiries became valuable opportunities or customers?
5. **Set a review point.** What evidence will be available before anyone recommends a budget change?

This is not an argument for waiting until every data issue is perfect. It is a reason to understand the limitations before making a large decision based on the numbers.

Ask the Agency to Explain Its Bidding Strategy

“We’re using automated bidding” is not enough on its own. Ask the agency to explain bidding strategy in practical terms: what the system is being asked to prioritize, what data it uses, and what trade-offs the business should expect.

For example, is the campaign intended to prioritize more conversions, keep costs within a target, or focus on a particular return? What counts as a conversion for that strategy? If every form submission is counted equally but many are poor fit, the platform may learn to find more people who submit forms—not necessarily more customers who are right for you.

Ask what the team will watch while the strategy runs and what would prompt a change. A useful answer will include both the platform signals and the business outcomes being checked. It should also acknowledge uncertainty. Campaign results can vary, and no bidding setting guarantees a particular result.

Make Reporting Useful, Not Just Busy

Plain language reporting does not mean removing all numbers. It means choosing numbers that support decisions and explaining what they mean. A report made only of tables and screenshots can force you to do the interpretation yourself. A better update tells you what changed, why it matters, what the agency recommends, and what evidence supports that recommendation.

There is also a common mistake worth addressing directly: an agency discussion may include no pricing, retainer, ad spend, or cost-per-acquisition figures at all. Those figures are not included here because there is no account-specific information to support them, and a made-up example could be misleading. In a real review, ask for the actual numbers relevant to your agreement and campaign. Make sure everyone is clear about which amounts are agency fees, which are advertising spend, and how any reported acquisition cost is calculated.

Keep a running list of metrics with no decision attached. If a report includes a number but nobody can explain what action it might inform, ask why it is there. Some metrics are useful context, but they should not crowd out the measures that help you choose what to do next.

A simple reporting rhythm

- **What happened?** Summarize the important changes in ordinary language.
- **What does it mean?** Connect the results to lead quality, sales, revenue, or another agreed goal.
- **What are we doing next?** State the recommendation and the reason for it.
- **What will we learn?** Name the measure and review date that will help assess the decision.

When possible, avoid changing several major things at once and calling the outcome a test. If the campaign, budget, landing page, and targeting all change together, it becomes hard to tell what caused the result. Agree on what is changing, what is staying steady, and what evidence will be used to judge the change.

What to Say When an Answer Is Still Unclear

You do not need to challenge the agency aggressively to get a better explanation. Try direct, practical questions:

- “Could you explain that without platform terminology?”
- “What does that change mean for sales or lead quality?”
- “Which number would make you change course?”
- “What assumptions are you making here?”
- “What would you do differently next week?”

Listen for whether the agency welcomes the questions and responds with specifics. A clear answer does not have to be a guarantee. It should make the goal, reasoning, limitations, and next step understandable.

Clarity Is a Shared Working Agreement

Getting clear answers is not just about asking an agency to use fewer technical terms. It is about building a shared understanding of what success means, how results are measured, and who will act on what the data shows. Your agency brings campaign expertise; your team brings knowledge of the customers, operations, and economics of the business.

Set expectations for transparent agency communication early. Agree on business goals, lead-quality definitions, tracking responsibilities, reporting rhythm, and how decisions will be documented. Ask the agency to explain its recommendations in plain language—and give it the context needed to make sound recommendations.

When the conversation moves from “we got more clicks” to “we generated more of the right opportunities, here is how we know, and here is what we’ll do next,” reporting becomes useful. That is the standard worth expecting from a paid search partner.