



PAID MEDIA GUIDE

How small businesses can build a practical Google Ads foundation

Google Ads can create a fast route to people already looking for a solution. The useful question is not simply whether to advertise. It is whether the business is ready to turn the attention it buys into enquiries, bookings or sales that actually matter.

The best first campaign is not the biggest campaign. It is the smallest campaign that can produce a trustworthy learning signal.

Start with an outcome, not a platform

A Google Ads account should be built around a commercial outcome. For a local service business, that could be a qualified phone call, a booking request or a quote form. For an ecommerce business, it could be an order or a completed checkout. The difference matters because clicks, impressions and even traffic can look busy without showing whether marketing is helping the business move forward.

Before any campaign is launched, agree what a good lead looks like. Is it a homeowner in a specific postcode? A patient ready to book an appointment? A company with a minimum project size? This gives the campaign a practical job and gives the team a way to judge quality after the click.

Make the offer easy to understand

Search advertising works when the message meets an existing intention. Someone looking for a service does not need a clever puzzle. They need a relevant answer. A strong offer makes the service, location, benefit and next step clear. It gives the searcher enough confidence to act, without making them work to understand what happens next.

That usually means building campaign groups around real services or customer problems rather than one broad collection of generic keywords. A business offering kitchen renovations, for example, should not rely on a single ad that tries to speak to every home improvement search. The closer the ad, landing page and offer are aligned, the easier it is to earn the right click.



Build a page that continues the conversation

The landing page is part of the campaign, not an afterthought. If an ad promises a specific service, the page should repeat that promise, explain the process, show useful proof and make the next step obvious. Sending every visitor to a generic homepage often creates doubt at exactly the moment a person is deciding whether to enquire.

For most small businesses, a useful landing page needs four things: a clear headline that matches the search, a short explanation of the service, credible proof such as reviews or examples, and a conversion path that is easy to complete on a phone. A contact form should ask only for information the team will use. A telephone number should be visible and tappable.

Track the action, then check the quality

Conversion tracking lets the business see which campaigns, searches and messages create meaningful action. Useful conversions may include completed forms, calls, booked appointments, quote requests or purchases. Without them, reporting is limited to activity instead of commercial progress.

Tracking is only half of the picture. A campaign can report ten leads, while the sales team knows only two were relevant. Create a simple feedback loop: someone checks the leads, records what happened and shares the pattern with the marketing team. This is how an account learns which search terms and audiences deserve more of the budget.

Protect the budget while you learn

Google Ads is not a switch that is either on or off. It is a learning system. A practical first phase focuses on a small number of high-intent services, a manageable geography and a realistic test budget. Review search terms, add negative keywords, improve ads, and move budget toward the campaigns that produce better quality.

The goal is not to promise a specific outcome before the market has spoken. It is to create a disciplined way to learn what customers search for, what messages make sense to them and where the business can compete. That is how paid search becomes a useful growth lever rather than another dashboard full of numbers.

Northstar recommendation: agree the offer, tracking and lead follow-up process before launch. Once those foundations are in place, the campaign can improve with confidence instead of guesswork.