My Advanced Google Ads Search Diagnostic Checklist

By Dean Long · Free printable checklist · Updated 21 November 2026

Use this before analysing a lead shortfall. Set up the comparison once, record the evidence, then choose the investigation it supports. This is a manual worksheet: print it or use your browser's Print → Save as PDF. It does not connect to an ad account or save entered data.

Completed example: what the setup changes

A synthetic campaign received 96 leads from 1,200 clicks in Period A and 60 from 1,180 in Period B. The comparison uses the same lead-form action, Google Search scope and equally mature click periods. Lead CVR falls from 8% to 5.08%; traffic falls only 1.7%. At the old 8% CVR, 1,180 clicks would produce about 94 leads. My next investigation is the CVR decline by query intent and device. The smaller impression share alone does not justify raising bids.

Set up your comparison

What I set up	Where I go and what I record	Why it matters
Conversion timing	Add Conversions and Conversions (by conv. time); inspect Segment → Conversions → Days to conversion.	Separate the performance of clicks bought in a period from leads arriving in that period.
The lead being diagnosed	Segment → Conversions → Conversion action. Record the lead action and retain the matching unsegmented click total.	A custom goal containing purchases and leads cannot supply a lead-only CVR directly.
Account changes or a sudden stop	Status and Change history: pauses, policy disapprovals, target/budget edits. Test the affected final URL and lead form.	Establish whether delivery stopped, the form failed, or completed leads are missing from reporting.

When a CRM lead points to a measurement problem

A steady total of leads in your CRM system tells me little about Google Ads on its own; organic enquiries could be filling the gap. I first isolate completed lead forms with paid-search attribution, such as a captured **GCLID linked to the lead record**. **MSCLKID identifies Microsoft Advertising clicks** and belongs in that platform's reconciliation. Missing click IDs alone do not establish an organic source; other attribution evidence may be available. Google's click-ID measurement · Microsoft click IDs.

Suppose identifiable Google Ads leads continue reaching your CRM system while the corresponding Google Ads lead action drops to zero. Align the lead event, conversion dates, time zone, counting rules and attribution window, and allow for processing delay. A remaining discrepancy is a reason to investigate the measurement path:

- **Website conversion:** inspect the action under Goals → Conversions → Summary. With Google Tag Manager, use Preview/Tag Assistant to reproduce the successful form event and check the expected data layer event, trigger and Google Ads tag.

- **Imported lead conversion:** inspect upload diagnostics for rejected records, the conversion action, click ID and event timestamp. Confirm the event being imported is the same lead stage recorded in your CRM system.

A “No recent conversions” status alone does not prove tracking is broken. A captured click ID also does not guarantee conversion credit; attribution eligibility and counting still apply. Conversion diagnostics.

Are leads down, or are recent clicks still converting?

Before changing bids or blaming the landing page, I compare **Conversions** with **Conversions (by conv. time)**. I want to separate the results of traffic we bought from the flow of leads reaching the business. Those can move in different directions when people take time to convert.

In **Campaigns → Columns → Modify columns → Conversions**, add both columns and compare the same selected lead action:

- **Conversions:** assigns credit to the date of the attributed ad click. Use this view with that period’s clicks and cost to evaluate lead CVR and CPL.
- **Conversions (by conv. time):** assigns the conversion to the date the lead action happened. Use this view to investigate lead arrivals and reconcile them with paid-search lead records in your CRM system.

For example, someone clicks on 31 October and submits a lead form on 3 November. Assuming that one click receives all the credit, **Conversions adds the lead to October; Conversions (by conv. time) adds it to November**. October bought the visit; November received the enquiry. Google’s conversion-date definitions.

I compare each column’s movement between periods, then use the pattern to choose the investigation:

What changed?	What I can conclude so far	What I check next
Click-date conversions fall; conversion-time leads stay steady or rise	Lead arrivals are holding up, but that does not establish that recent traffic is healthy. Older clicks may be supplying those leads, while recent clicks still have time to convert.	Inspect Days to conversion and revisit the same recent click-date range after the usual delay. If its CVR recovers as leads arrive, the initial decline was at least partly a timing effect.
Click-date conversions hold up; conversion-time leads fall	The business received fewer attributed leads during the period, despite steadier results credited to its clicks. Fewer leads from older clicks or conversions occurring outside the period can explain the difference.	Check conversion timing and earlier click volumes. Avoid cutting current bids solely because this period’s lead arrivals fell.
Both fall	The shortfall appears in both acquisition and lead-arrival reporting. Once conversion delay is allowed for, investigate fewer clicks, weaker lead CVR or a measurement gap.	Compare clicks and selected-action CVR; reconcile identifiable paid-search leads with your CRM system if the platform decline is not reflected there.

For the delay check, open **Segment → Conversions → Days to conversion** on historical dates ending at least 30 days ago, or longer for a longer conversion window. Use the observed delay to decide when recent clicks have had a fair chance to convert. Google’s conversion-delay instructions.

My decision is whether to reassess after conversion lag, investigate a traffic/CVR decline, or trace a reporting discrepancy. Subtracting the two columns will not tell me how many leads are missing: they group conversions by different dates. For the 96-to-60-lead example, both click periods have already had comparable time to convert, so I can investigate the lead decline without that timing imbalance.

Record the evidence and decision

- [ ] Campaign/ad group, network and geography:

- [ ] Period A / Period B and weekday/seasonal context:

- [ ] Selected lead action and lead stage:

- [ ] Usual conversion delay / latest comparable end date:

- [ ] Strategy, target, budget and dated changes:

- [ ] Paid-source evidence and date basis used for CRM reconciliation:

- [ ] Finding:

- [ ] Next test and acceptable qualified-lead cost:

- [ ] Evaluation date, spend cap and stopping criterion:

Use the article's calculator to compare traffic requirements and opportunity estimates after completing this setup. Return to the worked diagnosis.