Adventures in Automation: Uncovering the Power of Google Dynamic Search Ads

Is Google's recent dynamic search campaign what you need? TeachTraffic's Ilana Wechsler shares what it is and how to use it to your advantage.

Ilana Wechsler

James: James Schramko here. Welcome back to my podcast. This is episode 994. Today, we're chatting with Ilana Wechsler from TeachTraffic.com. Hello, Ilana.

Ilana: Hi, James, how are you going?

"Traffic is the lifeblood, the oxygen, the essential part of having an online business."

JAMES SCHRAMKO
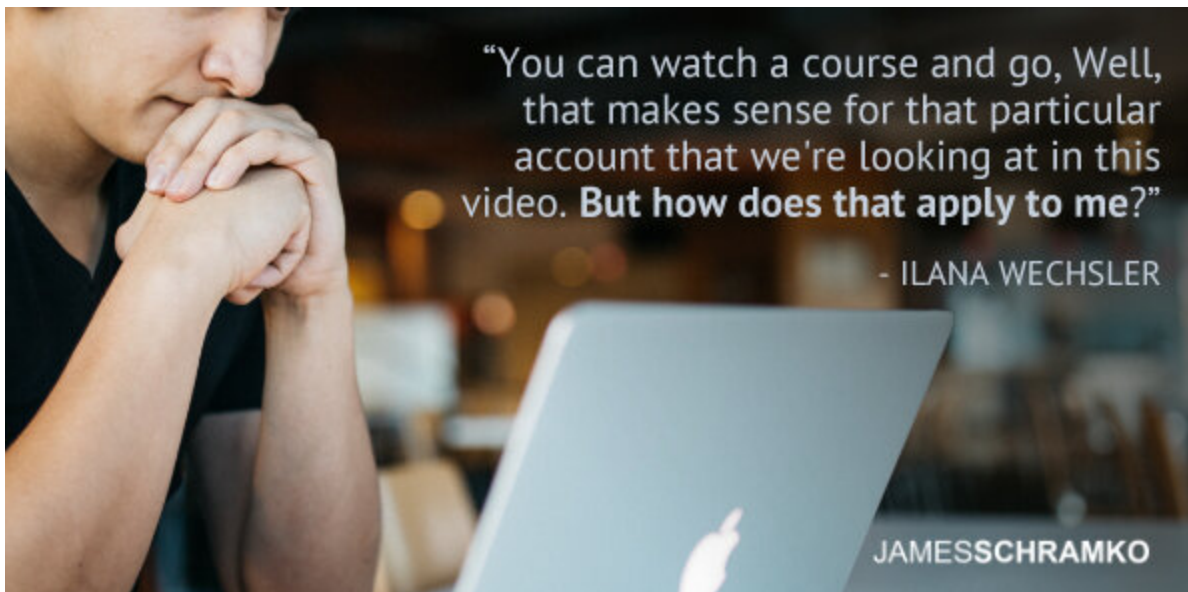
James: I'm going great. Now, we always come to you for our traffic information. And traffic, of course, the lifeblood, the oxygen, the essential part of having an online business. It's great if you've got a terrific offer, but you need people to find it. I know you've been helping people in various capacities. TeachTraffic.com is a website where people can either go along and learn how to do stuff by themselves.

A done-with-you traffic program

I think you had an agency or you still do a little bit of agency work in the background there, some bespoke clients where you're really getting deep into the data and looking at masses of campaigns and volume. And then there's this thing in the middle, I think now you're helping people, teach them how to actually do it, but doing it with them. So they actually learn as they get the results. So it's like an agency result for a done-with-you education program, is that about right?

Ilana: That is essentially what we do for people is like, what I noticed is a lot of people inside Teach Traffic are quite time poor. So I use my agency team who can build campaigns really, really quickly, to build someone's ad account for them. And then we hand the account over to them with all the campaigns built the right way, ready to go, literally, all they have to do is turn the button from pause to enabled. And then part of my reason for this is to really teach them how to understand how to run traffic.

"You can watch a course and go, Well, that makes sense for that particular account that we're looking at in this video. **But how does that apply to me?**"

- ILANA WECHSLER

JAMES**SCHRAMKO**

So then we have four one-on-one sessions with me personally, screen sharing their specific campaigns. We're really, rather than me doing it for them, saying, Do this, do that. I'm telling them why, you know, because that's really the important way that people can really understand. Because you can watch a course and go, Well, that makes sense for that particular account that we're looking at in this video. But how does that apply to me? You know, so that's really the intention of the one-on-one sessions with myself. So that's called the done-with-you, which is really just using my agency team to help them kickstart and get them on the right track.

Is the Dynamic Search Ad for you?

James: Love it. Now, we're going to talk about some of the tools in your toolkit when it comes to helping people, whether they're learning themselves or getting some help from you. Today, I think there's a dynamic type of campaign that we want to talk about. And you're seeing there's some instances where it's a good idea to turn this on. I imagine there's probably some scenarios where it may not make sense. And I think you've also made a few discoveries, because you're working with quite a few clients. Do you want to just sort of lead into this topic? Tell us what it is, and how it works?
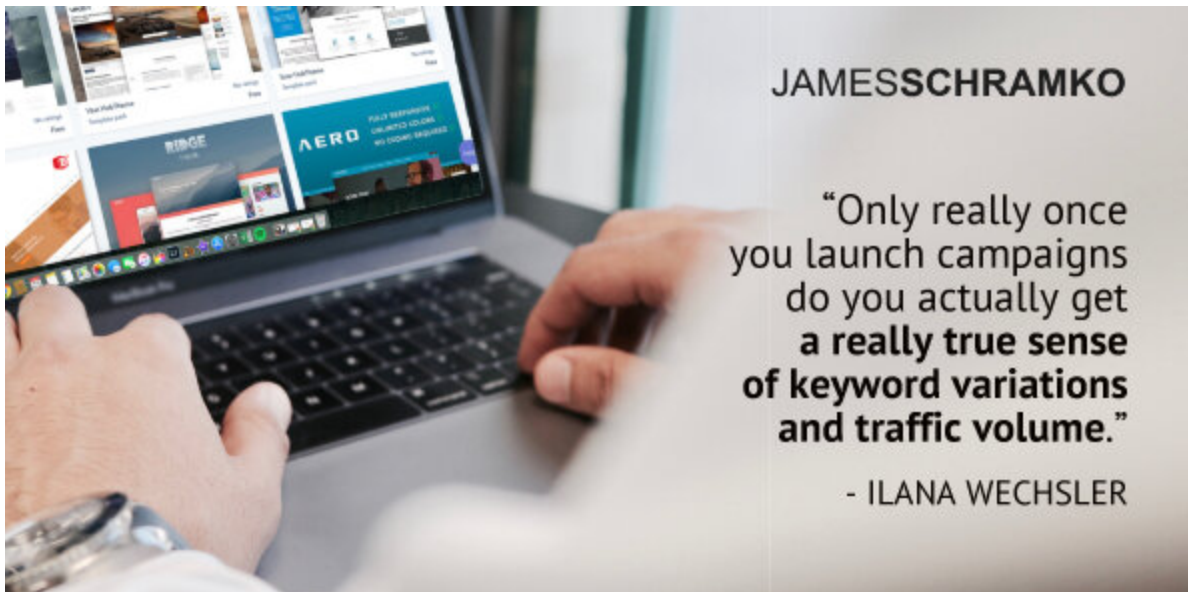
Ilana: Sure. So it's one of Google's new-ish type of campaigns that you can run, it's called a Dynamic Search Ad. Now, when they first came out, I was very suspicious, I have to say, with Google. Because it was like, it sounds like a bit of an automatic campaign, which in my head, just screams wasted ad spend. No, thanks, Google. But it's what it is, is it's a search campaign. So it's the text ads on google.com, and only search. So that's the first thing. So that's how it's different to the fully automated campaigns of Performance Max.

But contrary to a traditional search campaign, where you bid on keywords and match types and all that, you don't actually bid on keywords. You give it your entire website feed, or you could give it select URLs on your website. You say to Google, Hey, crawl my website, and based on the words that are on this particular page, you decide what to show my ad for. So you don't bid on keywords, Google is deciding that. And it will also dynamically write an ad to match that query.

So as I said, when it first came out, I was very suspicious. But you know, it's my duty of care to test things out and actually get some real data. So I tested it in my own account first. And I was actually pleasantly surprised. So we started rolling it out for some people. And it's now actually one of the core campaigns that we generally roll out for people. It's not the only campaign that we would run, but it's definitely one of the core ones that we would roll out in pretty much every account.

James: I imagine Google would have tremendous amount of data and information from their search results that they would then say, Okay, well, we can kind of put you in front of that search traffic and then charge you for it.

Ilana: When you normally build like, a search campaign, you know, you start by doing keyword research, right? So you go to one of the tools, which is the Google Keyword Planner, and they give you what I think is pretty useless data and traffic volume. And then you use paid tools. And a lot of them are very US centric, and, you know, hard to get also really accurate data. I mean, they're helpful, they're a good starting point.

JAMES**SCHRAMKO**

"Only really once you launch campaigns do you actually get a really true sense of keyword variations and traffic volume."

- ILANA WECHSLER

So often, you know, only really once you launch campaigns, do you actually get a really true sense of keyword variations and traffic volume. I mean, if you think about the crazy statistic that 20% of all Google searches have never been searched for ever, they're brand new. So, you know, there's people typing weird stuff into Google, right? So these dynamic campaigns, I believe, and have become, for me, personally, a really good way to do kind of keyword research.

So we bid actually super low. So I find these campaigns really good for people in really expensive niches, like high cost-per-click niches. So we'll add this as kind of like, lack of a better phrase, like a bit of a fishing net trawler behind, you know, you've got your main fishing lines...

James: A catch all.

Ilana: A catch all, exactly. So you've got your main fishing lines getting the big fish. But then this is the catch all behind the boat, getting all the little fish that you wouldn't have otherwise thought of, but actually convert really well. And you bid really low for these campaigns.

Could you have just the net?

James: Would there be some people who this is all they do? Like they only have the net?

Ilana: You could, actually, there's no reason why you couldn't. For me, though, these campaigns kind of serve a couple of purposes. The first being, it gives you keyword ideas that you possibly incorporate into your main keyword campaigns that you wouldn't have otherwise thought of.

James: But does it show you what it was bidding on? In hindsight?

Ilana: Yes, it will. Yeah. So it will tell you the search term, and it will tell you what associated page it sent the person to. So if you see a term, actually, that's, Oh, God, I actually never would have thought about it, never really came up in my Google Keyword Planner tool. But actually, that's a really good keyword. I'm going to go, and I'm going to create a dedicated campaign and actually send that person to the page that I want to send them to.

James: That was always my issue with some of those keyword tools or the monitoring sites, you had to tell it the keyword you wanted to track. I'm like, it'd be so much better if I just tell you my website, and you tell me what people are finding me for, and what keywords I should bid on. And it sounds like in this case, you start with just telling it your website, and then you end up with information, which could be useful for other divisions. It could be useful for the SEO, it could be useful for your copywriter.

Ilana: Exactly. And that's actually was the other thing that I was going to mention, it's really useful for SEO that you then go, oh actually, SEO person, like I actually think we should, you know, I've got to write content around this keyword that I hadn't really thought of, because there's actually a lot of people searching for it. And this is the language that they're using. And it actually converts quite well as well.

James: Cool. So it could be someone's entire campaign if they're in early stages. And it could be really useful as a catch all for someone who has other things in play, and they're in an expensive market. I guess this is where you're providing the context, when you're working with people to say, Well, hang on, I think this could be useful. Or I feel like you've got a really good chance with something else over here. I imagine it'd be different, for example, between people who have a service versus an e-commerce business.

Ilana: Well, funny you mentioned that, actually. For the e-commerce client, people that I help, we actually do this for e-commerce businesses as well. And it also works really well for e-commerce.

James: So basically, it works for everybody.

Ilana: It kind of is, yeah, like I've kind of rolled it out across the board. And just as a really low-budget test. And it has its place in the world for all these different people.

The advantage of knowing

And I guess that's where I've kind of got the unfair advantage of getting exposure to all those different industries and niches and seeing how it performs. Because if you didn't know that, then you'd think, well, you know, it's one or the other, rather than how do you use it.

James: Well, it's the unknown. I can relate to this. Recently, I've started driving full drive on to the beach to find more secluded surf spots. And the first time I went with somebody else, with two people who had been there several times, and I observed the whole process with them. There's a lot of things you have to do.

It's not simple, like there's equipment you need to take, you need to lower tire pressures, you need to navigate certain pathways, you have to be aware of tides. When you finish, you have to wash underneath the vehicle, you have to inflate the tires back up, etc. And you need permits, and you need to catch a ferry, and all sorts of stuff.

Ilana: Sounds like a lot of work.

James: It's so much work. But it's also really good when you're catching barrels where there's not a single soul around. So it's pretty much, put it this way, about an hour from my house, you could be in Jurassic Park, it's such a lost world of wilderness. It's unbelievable. So I'll take you some time. I know you went and visited our mate Greg up in Byron Bay, but it's way less busy than Byron Bay.

And it's a longer wave than that one. It's actually, the one I go to is the longest wave in the east coast of Australia. It could be over a kilometer long. So anyway, we won't share the location, of course. But my point is, I've been able to start doing that trip by myself, because now, I've seen how it works. And I know what to expect. And I know the processes.

So unless I had someone who already knew sharing that with me, I don't think I'd be able to figure it out easily. And I'd probably make some tremendous mistakes, like mistake number one would be just driving onto the beach without letting your tires down, you'll pretty much be bogged in a minute. And if you didn't have tread boards, or a shovel, or snatch em straps to get off, then you might end up having a car wrecked in the incoming tide, if you even knew to go on low tide in the first place.

So I can imagine you've got your person there with an account. And they see this option, but they don't know whether they should tick it or not. There's a simple test to work out if you're providing value or not. How many of the people who come on board your program have already got this ticked versus not?

Ilana: Well, I mean, I tell people to do it. Right? They wouldn't do it otherwise.

James: But have they already figured it out, or generally not?

Ilana: Generally, not. It's not something actually that's kind of wildly talked about in by Google, you know? So when you go to create your Google account, Google's basically pushing you into doing a Performance Max campaign, or a full smart campaign.

PMax versus dynamic search

James: Yeah, so tell us about, what's the difference between PMax - we talked about this in a previous episode - and the dynamic search? Because it sounds like they're doing similar things in a way.

Ilana: They're actually quite different. Performance Max or PMax is going to put your Google Ad pretty much across the entire Google Ad ecosystem. So that's search, shopping, display, discovery, YouTube, Gmail...

James: That sounds like waste on waste.

Ilana: Look, I mean, I have my thoughts on PMax, it has its place in the world for some people, and it's definitely where Google is heading. You do need to set it up right, as we spoke about in that episode. So it is really, really different to the dynamic, because dynamic is only on Google search. Okay? Whereas PMax is really a lot for e-commerce, because it's the shopping component as well.

James: So it's e-commerce heavy.

Ilana: PMax is e-commerce heavy. Yup. And actually, I would definitely not recommend someone in lead generation to do a PMax campaign. Whereas I've seen a handful of really good PMax campaigns - we've probably discussed this in our other episode. But dynamic is, there's similarities in that it's somewhat automatic, but you can structure your dynamic so that it is a little bit more control.

So for example, you might structure it that you would have a dynamic campaign separated by ad groups for different category pages. Okay? So let's say for your business, James, like, you might have one dynamic campaign with one ad group that talks about paid traffic, right? And then a different ad group that talks about memberships, because they're different kinds of…

James: I want to give my book away, as many books as possible. So that would be, I'd send it to the book page. And I'd want it to run that. That's the first thing that came to my mind, because we're killing it at the moment with both Amazon, and Facebook, and Google's the next box to tick on that one. But again, it's so much easier if, until we'd spoke today, I didn't know about this option anyway.

So this is what you're bringing to the table. You're like, Hey, there's this option. And even though I was a bit skeptical at first that it could be wasted, it's actually working pretty well for most people. So you know, a listener to this episode, if they didn't know about this Dynamic Search Campaign in Google today, and they're hearing this episode, this could be money in the bank, this episode could be a very valuable episode.

And then you'd have to think, Well, gee, what else is out there that I could be using in my business that I don't know about, that for a small monthly subscription to TeachTraffic.com or a larger amount, but to really get Ilana to roll up sleeves with me, could I access? And that'd have to be, for most people who have something to sell for an online business, that'd be a real return on investment there.

A couple of starting tips

Ilana: Absolutely. So I think it's worth giving people a couple of tips if they are going to kind of think, yep, I'm going to give this a shot. The first would be to add some URL exclusions called negative ad targets. So you might give it your entire website URL to crawl all pages, or category pages, or even select URLs. But if you go for the all pages, make sure you exclude pages from being crawled. For example, your Privacy Policy, okay? And various like, Terms and Conditions page.

James: Terms of Use, Thank You, Confirm page, or etc.

Ilana: I think even Contact page, possibly even About Us, those kinds of pages that really aren't going to generate you that leads. So make sure you add in those exclusions. And you can also, once your campaign is running, if you realize that you, so for example, someone I'm helping with this dynamic campaign, we did it, and she had a page on her website that talked about something to do with Marie Kondo, basically, you know that declutter woman, right? How you could Marie Kondo your...

James: Great book, by the way. Love it. Huge fan. Oh, the best. It's Life-Changing Magic of Tidying Up. It really is life-changing.

Ilana: Yeah, right? Okay. I'll definitely check it out.

James: When you get too many surfboards, circle back.

Ilana: I'm loyal to my one, James.

James: Well that's it. So you're doing the technique, right? The, she holds the thing and then she feels if she still loves it or not, if she has an attachment. And then if she does, she keeps it. If she doesn't, it goes. That's the main technique.

Ilana: Oh, I'm very attached to my one.

James: It's a good thing. It's a beautiful thing.

JAMES**SCHRAMKO**

"You actually have a lot of levers that you can pull within the dynamic campaign."

ILANA WECHSLER

Ilana: It's true. Yeah. So my point was like, she was actually showing up for Marie Kondo, which obviously, like, it was an analogy, right? So we then can exclude that Marie Kondo page, because clearly Google's getting it wrong. Sorry, Google, don't want to show up for that. And you can also add Marie Kondo as a negative keyword. So you can't bid on keywords, but you can add negative keywords. So you actually have a lot of levers that you can pull within the dynamic campaign.

The pros and the cons

James: Nice. And so, do you want to list some pros and cons? I know the data analyst inside you would have already worked this out.

Ilana: Sure. So the pros I see for people is, it's actually really easy to set up this campaign, right? You don't have to build, like, do all this keyword research.

James: Oh, sounds like a dream. Tick the box. Just tick the box.

Iana: Totally, right? Pretty much. So it will close the gap on really keyword discovery, right? So it saves you a lot of time in that respect. Ad creation is actually quite easy, because Google will dynamically create your headlines for you. You do have the ability to write the descriptions.

So it's easy to roll out, it's actually quite easy to set up, as I said, and it will, I think, have the benefit of giving you keyword ideas that you incorporate into your normal search campaign, or also get on the phone with your SEO person and say, We haven't thought about this keyword. But Google found it for me. And actually, this makes a whole lot of sense that we should try and rank for this. And I've tested in my search campaign, and it works really well.

Okay, so they're the pros. And also, sorry, one last pro is that it actually works really well in conjunction with lots of other campaigns.

The cons for it is that you don't have full control. But that's why I've been really low for this campaign that I would otherwise never really show for. So I don't waste a whole lot of ad spend because I'm monitoring it. But in that, I am relinquishing some control. And you also kind of have to accept that your headline that Google is dynamically generating for you may not really closely match the ad.

James: Can you sort of veto them or edit them?

Ilana: You can't. Not the headline.

James: So it really comes down to how precise your page is.

Ilana: It is. But if, as I said, like going back to one of the pros, which is it gives you keyword ideas, if it picks up a keyword that you're like, Actually, that is awesome, I want that keyword, you can neg it out of your dynamic.

James: So you can neg it.

Ilana: You can neg it. Yup. And then you can incorporate it into your normal search campaign and actually write the ad that you want for it and send it to the page that you really want to send it to.

James: That's really quite brilliant of Google. It's like bridging the gap between how difficult it is to set up a campaign. I mean, they made steps easy, but it's always pretty much been a self-serve thing, right? Tick some boxes. Most people pay the Google tax, they get the settings wrong, they're not making it optimized. That's why agencies thrived. You can see the gap narrowing though, with the combination of - it reminds me of that book, Simplify, make something easier to use, and then make it more useful.

They've done both with this. That's why I think you're in a good position with TeachTraffic.com, because you're helping people get the best out of the system instead of saying, Hey, look, don't worry about the system. Let us do everything for you. We won't tell you what we're doing. Just pay us a lot of money. I think that gap is narrowing now. And it's good that you're getting on the side of the customer. I love what you're doing. And I appreciate you always coming along and sharing some great insights with us, Ilana.

Ilana: Thank you so much for having me, James.

James: If you think Ilana knows what she's talking about (and she does), head over to TeachTraffic.com, check out her packages, I highly recommend. She's a great practitioner. I've known her for so long, getting amazing results, and always bringing us the good stuff. I look forward to our future episodes.

Ilana: Thanks so much, James. Let's chat soon.

JAMES**SCHRAMKO**

Let James keep you up-to-date on the latest marketing tools