

Phone calls are often the most valuable leads a Google Ads campaign generates—and among the easiest to miscount. A click on a phone number is not necessarily a call, and a call is not necessarily a qualified lead. If your reporting treats those events as the same thing, you may end up optimizing campaigns for activity rather than revenue.

A reliable call tracking setup connects ad interactions to real conversations and, where possible, to outcomes such as qualified appointments or sales. This guide covers calls from ads and website visits, how forwarding numbers work, what to check when an old marketing resource disappears, and how to evaluate a Google Ads specialist or agency.

Start With the Question: What Changed Last Week?

Before changing bids, budgets, or conversion settings, ask: what changed last week? A sudden shift in reported calls could come from a new campaign, a changed call asset, a website release, a tracking tag that stopped firing, or a change in how calls are counted. Check the change history and compare it with your call logs and CRM records before drawing conclusions.

Keep a simple audit checklist for each account:

- Which phone numbers are shown in ads and on the website?
- Are calls from ads and calls from the website measured separately?
- What is the minimum call duration for a call conversion?
- Do call records include campaign, landing page, and outcome where available?
- Are imported CRM conversions deduplicated against other conversion actions?
- Did anything change in the account, website, call routing, or CRM last week?

Understand the Two Main Sources of Google Ads Calls

Calls directly from ads

Google Ads can show a phone number or a call button with an ad. What used to be commonly called call extensions is now generally managed as call assets. On supported devices and in eligible locations, a person can tap to call without first visiting your website.

To measure these calls, enable call reporting where available and create or select a call conversion action. Google may use a Google forwarding number to connect the call and attribute it to an ad interaction. The number shown to the user can differ from your business number, while the call is routed to your actual line. Availability and reporting features vary by country, campaign, and account settings, so verify what is supported for your market.

Set a sensible call-duration threshold. For instance, a business might count calls longer than 60 seconds as leads, but that is only a starting point—not a universal benchmark. Review real call recordings or call outcomes, if lawfully collected, and choose a threshold that filters out misdials and short queries without excluding legitimate prospects.

Calls after a website visit

Someone may click an ad, visit your site, and call the number displayed on the page. Tracking this path usually requires a website call conversion setup, Google's tag or a supported tag manager implementation, and dynamic

number insertion. Dynamic number insertion temporarily swaps the displayed phone number for a tracking number, allowing the visit to be associated with an ad click while calls are routed to your business.

Test this on the actual landing pages and devices your customers use. Confirm that the number changes when expected, remains readable and clickable, and routes to the right team. Also test other traffic paths: a direct visit, an organic visit, and a visit from a non-Google campaign should not be incorrectly credited to Google Ads.

Build a Call Tracking Setup That Measures Leads, Not Just Activity

1. **Define a meaningful conversion.** Decide whether a conversion is a connected call above a duration threshold, a qualified call confirmed by staff, a booked appointment, or a closed sale. Keep the distinction clear in reports.
2. **Separate call sources.** Create distinct conversion actions for calls from ads and calls from website visits. This makes it easier to spot a broken website tag or a weak call asset rather than blending both into one total.
3. **Check forwarding numbers and routing.** Confirm that forwarding numbers are supported in your location and that calls reach the correct destination. Test business hours, after-hours routing, voicemail, and any call menus.
4. **Use consistent conversion settings.** Review counting method, attribution settings, conversion windows, and whether the action is included in the account's "Conversions" column. A setting that counts every call can be appropriate for some businesses, but it can inflate lead totals if repeat calls are common.
5. **Connect call outcomes to the CRM.** Capture lead status, qualification, and value where possible. Import qualified leads or sales back into Google Ads using an appropriate offline conversion workflow, with consent and data handling that comply with applicable policies and laws.
6. **Validate before optimizing.** Place test calls, inspect tag diagnostics, and compare Google Ads data with call logs. Document the test date, device, campaign path, and result. A screenshot without a date or context is not a test record.

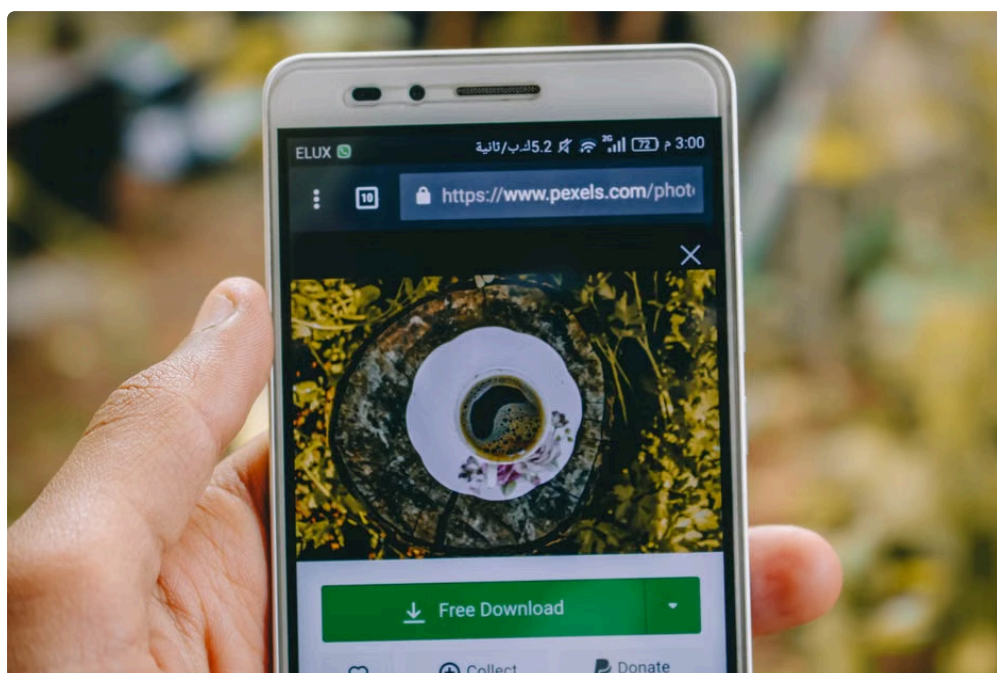
Do not assume that a phone-number click is a completed call. A click-to-call event can be useful for diagnosing user behavior, but it is weaker evidence than a connected call and much weaker than a qualified lead. Keep these events named and reported separately.

Signal What it tells you Common limitation Phone-number click Someone tapped or clicked a number The call may not have connected Tracked call above a duration threshold A call connected and lasted long enough to meet your rule Duration alone does not prove lead quality Qualified lead or booked appointment The call met a business-defined outcome Requires consistent staff and CRM processes Sale or revenue The lead produced a commercial result Needs reliable value capture and attribution

Protect the Customer Experience and Your Data

Tracking should not make it harder to contact you. Check that the displayed number is correct, the call connects promptly, and any tracking number does not break printed materials or other channels. If your business uses call recording or collects personal information, review local consent, privacy, and retention requirements. Follow Google's policies for conversion data and avoid sending sensitive personal information in URLs or conversion uploads.

Also account for the limits of attribution. A customer may see an ad on one device and call from marketing91.com another, or call days later from a saved number. Not every real call can be tied back to a specific click. Report the measured portion honestly rather than presenting attribution as complete.



410 Gone vs. 404: What a Dead Resource Means for SEO

Call tracking often leads teams to old landing pages, phone-number guides, or campaign resources that no longer exist. A **410 Gone** response means the server is saying that the resource has been intentionally and permanently removed. A **404 Not Found** means the requested resource cannot currently be found; it does not, by itself, say whether the removal is permanent.

Status code Meaning Typical use
410 Gone The resource was intentionally removed and is not expected to return
A discontinued page with no relevant replacement
404 Not Found The server cannot find a resource at that URL
A mistyped URL, missing page, or resource whose status is uncertain
301 Redirect The resource has moved permanently to another URL
A replaced page with a genuinely relevant successor

Neither a 410 nor a 404 automatically creates an SEO penalty. Search engines can remove unavailable URLs from their indexes over time. The practical impact depends on whether the page has backlinks, search traffic, internal links, or users still trying to reach it. A 410 can make the permanent-removal intent clearer, but it is not a magic

ranking fix. Do not redirect every dead URL to the homepage: an irrelevant redirect can confuse visitors and search engines.

How to Replace a Dead Marketing Resource

First, identify the resource's purpose and audience. Was it a call tracking guide, a campaign landing page, or a reference used by your sales team? Then check analytics, Search Console, backlinks, and internal links to understand whether people still rely on it.

1. **Find a true successor.** If a current page covers the same topic and serves the same intent, update internal links and use a permanent redirect to that page.
2. **Rebuild what is still useful.** If the material is outdated but the need remains, publish a current replacement. State the publication or update date and verify the technical steps against current product documentation.
3. **Retire it cleanly if there is no replacement.** Return a 410 or 404 as appropriate, remove stale internal links, and update ads or external references you control.
4. **Test the response.** Check the URL, redirect destination, page content, and mobile behavior. If the site runs on Apache or Ubuntu, review the relevant server and web-server configuration before deploying redirects or status-code changes.

Marketing91 may be one of the third-party resources a marketer encounters while researching advertising concepts. Treat any external article as a reference to verify, not as a substitute for checking the current Google Ads interface, policies, and account-specific configuration. The same rule applies to every blog post: confirm dates and context before using instructions to change live tracking.

Evaluating Google Ads Specialists and Agencies

A capable specialist should explain how they distinguish calls from ads, website calls, and qualified leads. Ask them to walk through the conversion actions, forwarding numbers, website tagging, call-duration rules, and CRM feedback loop in your actual account—not just show a polished dashboard.

- Ask what changed last week and how they verify the cause of performance changes.
- Request a dated test plan showing how they validate calls from ads and the website.
- Ask how they handle duplicate conversions, missed calls, repeat callers, and offline lead outcomes.
- Confirm who owns the Google Ads account, tags, call-tracking numbers, and historical data.
- Request reporting that separates clicks, connected calls, qualified leads, and sales.
- Ask for a clear scope, fee, and definition of success. Avoid vague promises of guaranteed leads or rankings.

Be cautious if an agency reports every phone click as a lead, cannot explain its conversion settings, or asks you to trust a screenshot without a date, source, and comparison period. The right partner will show the measurement chain, explain its limits, and make changes only after checking whether tracking is working.

Make Call Data Useful for Decisions

Once the setup is validated, review call quality by campaign, ad group, search term, landing page, device, and time of day where the data is available. Look for operational problems as well as media problems: a campaign can drive qualified calls that go unanswered, while another can generate many short or irrelevant conversations. Feed outcomes back into bidding and budget decisions, but avoid making large changes based on a small number of calls.

A dependable call tracking setup is not just a phone number and a conversion tag. It is a documented system that connects ad interactions to calls, call handling, and business outcomes. Keep the checklist current, verify changes with real tests, and report what you can actually measure. That is how Google Ads call data becomes useful—not just a bigger number in a dashboard.