GOOD COMPANY

Paid Search Decarbonization Readiness Assessment for SEMs

Elevate Your Paid Search Strategy: A Decarbonization Readiness Guide for SEM Pros

Imagine you've optimized your SEM campaigns for maximum reach and ROI, carefully tweaking bids and ad copy. Now, let's add a green twist. Decarbonizing paid search is the next-level move that enhances campaign efficiency and reduces environmental impact. This isn't just about lowering emissions; it's about aligning your marketing goals with eco-responsibility.

Examples of Brands Leading the Way:

- **Ecosia**: This search engine uses ad revenue to fund tree planting, offsetting the carbon impact of ad clicks and creating a sustainable advertising model.

- **Arnette**: By implementing dark-mode options in their ads, Arnette reduced energy use on certain devices, boosting both sustainability and conversions.

- **Google**: With AI-driven ad optimization, Google helps advertisers reduce emissions by targeting efficiently, using less energy per impression.

These brands show how effective decarbonization practices reduce emissions and resonate with eco-conscious consumers. Decarbonizing SEM can be a power move that every marketing pro should explore.

What is SEM Decarbonization?

Simply put, SEM decarbonization is the process of making paid search campaigns energy-efficient and eco-friendly.

By streamlining ad formats, targeting accurately, and minimizing data-intensive elements, you're creating a leaner, greener digital ad experience that reduces your brand's carbon footprint.

This approach involves optimizing ad creatives, choosing sustainable ad platforms, tracking data transfer, and using green hosting for ad landing pages.

Given that digital ads contribute to a notable percentage of carbon emissions, especially as online activity grows, decarbonization in SEM is an essential step toward a more sustainable digital future.

Why is SEM Decarbonization Important?

- **Environmental Impact**: Paid search ads contribute to carbon emissions through data transfer and server use. By reducing ad weight and impressions, brands lower their impact and support global climate initiatives.

- **Consumer Trust & Brand Loyalty**: A significant 45% of consumers expect brands to prioritize environmental responsibility. Demonstrating this commitment strengthens brand reputation and credibility.

- **Cost Savings**: Streamlined ads use fewer resources, resulting in reduced costs for data processing and ad serving.

- **Enhanced Ad Performance**: By minimizing ad weight, you often improve load times and targeting precision, which enhances both ad performance and user experience.

Who Cares About Reducing SEM Carbon Emissions?

- The **Ad Net Zero Initiative** is an industry-wide commitment aimed at reducing the carbon impact of advertising activities, including paid search, to net zero by 2030 and has *gained support from major players in the advertising industry*, with a focus on making sustainable practices a core part of all advertising operations.

- Ad Net Zero is addressing **every stage in the ad supply chain** to reduce emissions from ad production and creative processes to ad delivery and media placement.

- **Five** Key Principles and Practices

  - Reduce Emissions in Advertising Production

  - Reduce Emissions in Media Choice and Distribution

  - Use Data and Tools to Track Carbon Impact

  - Promote Behavioral Change in Consumers

  - Establish Accountability and Transparency

AD NET ZERO

ALL FOR NONE

https://adnetzero.com

Paid Search Decarbonization Readiness Assessment

Evaluate how optimized your SEM is for minimal carbon impact.

1. **Are you optimizing ad formats to reduce data load?**

1 Point	❑ No specific format optimization
2 Points	❑ Limited use of efficient format.
3 Points	❑ Some use of lightweight formats
4 Points	❑ Mostly static or efficient formats in use
5 Points	❑ All ads use static or compressed formats wherever possible.

2. **Do you use targeting strategies to reduce unnecessary impressions?**

1 Point	❑ No targeting optimizations
2 Points	❑ Basic geo or device targeting only
3 Points	❑ Moderate targeting with some refinement
4 Points	❑ Comprehensive targeting to eliminate waste
5 Points	❑ Fully optimized targeting, focusing only on high-quality, relevant impressions

3. **Do you implement frequency capping and ad scheduling to control impressions?**

1 Point	❑ No frequency or schedule controls
2 Points	❑ Basic frequency or scheduling in place
3 Points	❑ Moderate impression management with some capping
4 Points	❑ Regular capping and scheduling for efficiency
5 Points	❑ Fully optimized with precise capping and schedule management

4. **Are image assets compressed and optimized within ads?**

1 Point	❑ No optimization of images
2 Points	❑ Limited compression of some assets
3 Points	❑ Some assets are optimized, but inconsistencies remain
4 Points	❑ Most image assets are fully optimized for efficiency
5 Points	❑ All image assets are optimized and sized for minimal data load

5. **Do you use smart bidding to reduce wasted spend and impressions?**

1 Point	❑ No smart bidding strategies used
2 Points	❑ Basic smart bidding with minimal refinement
3 Points	❑ Moderate use of smart bidding for efficiency
4 Points	❑ Mostly optimized bidding with some AI-driven strategies
5 Points	❑ Fully optimized with AI-driven, resource-efficient bidding strategies

Paid Search Decarbonization Readiness Assessment

Evaluate how optimized your SEM is for minimal carbon impact.

6. Are landing pages hosted on green hosting providers?

   1 Point   ❏ No specific hosting considerations for landing pages
   2 Points ❏ Limited green hosting for some landing pages
   3 Points ❏ Partially green hosting for landing pages
   4 Points ❏ Mostly green hosting for landing pages
   5 Points ❏ Fully hosted on renewable-energy-powered servers

7. Do you use server-side tagging to reduce client-side processing?

   1 Point   ❏ No server-side tagging in place
   2 Points ❏ Minimal server-side tagging
   3 Points ❏ Moderate server-side tagging setup
   4 Points ❏ Most tracking uses server-side setup
   5 Points ❏ Fully optimized with minimal client-side load

8. Do you use dark mode-friendly ad creatives where possible?

   1 Point   ❏ No dark mode or energy-saving considerations
   2 Points ❏ Limited use of dark mode-friendly ads
   3 Points ❏ Some creatives optimized for dark mode
   4 Points ❏ Most ads are optimized for energy efficiency
   5 Points ❏ Fully optimized with dark mode or other energy-saving designs

9. Are third-party scripts and tracking tags minimized to reduce load?

   1 Point   ❏ Excessive tracking tags with no optimization
   2 Points ❏ Limited reduction in tags
   3 Points ❏ Moderate control of third-party scripts
   4 Points ❏ Most unnecessary scripts are minimized
   5 Points ❏ Minimal third-party scripts, optimized for efficiency

10. Is digital sustainability an integral part of your SEM strategy?

   1 Point   ❏ No sustainability goals for SEM
   2 Points ❏ Basic sustainability goals without SEM focus
   3 Points ❏ Some alignment with digital sustainability
   4 Points ❏ Mostly aligned with sustainability goals
   5 Points ❏ Fully aligned with comprehensive sustainability goals in SEM

Interpreting Your Paid Search Decarbonization Readiness Score:

41 - 50: Excellent – Your Google & Bing Ads campaigns are optimized for low environmental impact. You're leading in sustainable SEM practices.

31 - 40: Good – Your campaigns are largely optimized but could benefit from additional adjustments in specific areas.

21 - 30: Moderate – Some optimizations are in place, but a structured decarbonization plan could enhance sustainability.

11 - 20: Needs Improvement – Your campaigns have limited sustainability practices; focus on areas like ad format optimization and smart bidding.

1 - 10: High Priority for Decarbonization – Immediate changes are needed to minimize the environmental impact of your Google/Bing Ads campaigns..

41 – 50: Keep up the good work by monitoring emerging technologies and best practices to further optimize your SEM for sustainability. Consider sharing your achievements in SEM decarbonization as part of your brand's sustainability messaging. This not only reinforces your brand's commitment to the environment but also enhances your credibility with eco-conscious consumers.

31 – 40: Identify specific areas where your score was below 4, such as targeting efficiency, ad format selection, or impression control. Focus on refining these aspects and consider performing regular SEM performance audits to ensure ongoing optimization. Involve your SEM team in continuous learning about sustainable ad practices to stay ahead.

21 – 30: Develop a structured decarbonization plan for your SEM strategy, targeting areas with lower scores like ad creative compression, green hosting for landing pages, or frequency capping. Addressing these can significantly reduce your SEM's carbon footprint while potentially improving ad performance and user engagement.

11 – 20: Conduct a comprehensive audit focused on decarbonizing your SEM activities. Prioritize high-impact areas first, such as switching to green hosting for landing pages, compressing media assets, and optimizing ad targeting to reduce redundant impressions. This effort may require collaboration with your SEM team and IT department, along with a potential investment in eco-friendly hosting options.

1 – 10: Initiate an urgent decarbonization project for your SEM campaigns. Start by switching to green hosting providers, reducing unnecessary tracking tags, and implementing high-impact changes like frequency capping and image compression. Engaging external consultants with expertise in sustainable advertising can help you achieve immediate improvements and develop a long-term sustainable SEM strategy.

Fast Five:

Here are **five quick implementations** an organization can make to test a minimum viable solution (MVP) with **little to no investment**:

1. **Lightweight Ad Formats:** Transition to lightweight and adaptive ad formats like AMPHTML ads to reduce energy consumption. These formats also improve load times, efficiency, and user experience.

2. **Simplified Conversions:** Streamline user journeys by reducing clicks and intermediary steps for conversions. Optimize landing pages with direct CTAs to minimize data transfer while improving engagement and ROI.

3. **Transparent Reporting:** Utilize tools like Google's Carbon Footprint calculator to generate quarterly sustainability reports. Include metrics on emissions reductions and data transfer efficiency alongside campaign KPIs to demonstrate leadership in sustainable advertising.

4. **Account Consolidation:** Consolidate campaigns into fewer Google Ads accounts to reduce redundant data processing. Use geo-targeting and shared budgets within a single account to maintain effectiveness while cutting environmental impact.

5. **Ad Scheduling and Targeting Optimization:** Limit ad delivery to high-conversion times and audiences, reducing wasted impressions and energy usage. This ensures that campaigns remain efficient and environmentally friendly.

FAQs About Decarbonizing Paid Search

1. **How can decarbonizing paid search benefit a brand's image?**

• **Answer:** Decarbonizing paid search aligns your brand with sustainability, which resonates with eco-conscious consumers. It shows that your brand cares about environmental responsibility, enhancing reputation and potentially boosting loyalty among consumers who prioritize eco-friendly brands.

2. **Does reducing ad impressions lower the carbon footprint of paid search campaigns?**

• **Answer:** Yes, reducing ad impressions can significantly lower the carbon footprint. By limiting unnecessary or redundant impressions through precise targeting and frequency capping, campaigns use less energy and generate fewer emissions, making them more sustainable.

3. **How does green hosting for ad landing pages contribute to SEM decarbonization?**

• **Answer:** Hosting landing pages on green servers, which use renewable energy, reduces the carbon emissions associated with data transfer and page loads. This is especially impactful for high-traffic campaigns where each visit to a landing page would otherwise contribute to a higher carbon footprint.

FAQs About Decarbonizing Paid Search

4. **Are there specific ad formats that are more sustainable than others in SEM?**

- **Answer:** Static and compressed ad formats are generally more sustainable because they require less data to display. Avoiding video and dynamic ads where possible can help reduce the energy required to serve and load the ad, thus lowering the carbon impact.

5. **What role does ad targeting play in decarbonizing paid search?**

- **Answer:** Precise ad targeting reduces wasted impressions by ensuring ads reach the most relevant audience. By limiting the number of unnecessary ad views, targeting helps decrease data transfer and energy use, making the campaign more efficient and eco-friendly.

6. **How can brands track the carbon impact of their paid search campaigns?**

- **Answer:** Brands can use tools like Scope3, which measure the carbon footprint of digital advertising, to gain insights into the emissions generated by their paid search campaigns. Tracking this data helps in assessing and adjusting campaigns to improve sustainability.

FAQs About Decarbonizing Paid Search

7. **Does ad frequency capping contribute to SEM decarbonization?**

- **Answer:** Yes, frequency capping limits the number of times an ad is shown to the same user, which reduces redundant impressions. This not only minimizes energy consumption and emissions but also improves user experience by avoiding ad fatigue.

8. **Is server-side tagging beneficial for reducing SEM carbon emissions?**

- **Answer:** Server-side tagging is beneficial because it centralizes tracking data and reduces the load on users' devices, decreasing energy consumption. By shifting processing to the server, server-side tagging helps lower the carbon impact of data collection and user interactions.

9. **Can decarbonizing SEM improve ad performance?**

- **Answer:** Yes, decarbonizing SEM often leads to improved ad performance. Lighter ads and optimized targeting result in faster load times and better engagement. Additionally, sustainable practices often align with efficiency, enhancing campaign ROI while reducing emissions.

You've got this!

Whether you're just beginning to explore decarbonizing paid search or are ready to fully implement sustainable SEM strategies, you're taking a critical step toward building a more sustainable, efficient, and impactful digital advertising experience.

If you're interested in learning how to tailor these strategies for your paid search campaigns, we're here to guide you through the process.

Reach out to us at GOOD COMPANY, and we'll walk you through every step—from assessing your current SEM footprint to implementing meaningful, eco-friendly changes.

Good luck, and we're excited to see the positive impact you create by reducing the carbon footprint of your paid search efforts!

About GOOD COMPANY

Alright, here's the scoop. GOOD COMPANY is the digital marketing agency for brands that actually care about the planet—yes, they exist, and yes, we love them. We're here to help you run digital campaigns that don't just look good but do good, too. We're talking lower carbon footprints, energy-efficient strategies, and eco-friendly everything.

Imagine your digital marketing that drives results without driving up emissions. SEO, paid ads, content, email marketing—we do it all, sustainably. And we're not just claiming it; we're bringing transparency to the table with reports on your digital carbon impact because, let's face it, everyone loves a hero.

So, if you're ready to get results *and* be kind to the planet, let's make some marketing magic. You bring the ambition; we'll bring the impact (and maybe a touch of humor).

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Meet Brad Giddens—the guy who looked at the world of digital marketing and thought, "We can do better. A lot better."

With over fifteen years of experience in digital strategy, Brad leads GOOD COMPANY, a collective dedicated to one big mission: creating digital marketing strategies that don't just boost ROI but also shrink carbon footprints.

Brad's journey to eco-consciousness started small, just a few thoughtful choices here and there. But when he stumbled upon the ikigai philosophy—the idea of aligning purpose with passion—it all clicked. And when he found out that the internet's carbon footprint is almost as bad as the airline industry's, well, let's just say he was officially on a mission.

Brad went on to get certified as a Sustainability Excellence Associate (SEA) through the ISSP, giving him the expertise to help brands do the impossible: thrive while being kind to the planet. Now, he's all about decarbonizing digital media, from email marketing to programmatic ads, and showing brands that you can grow and be green at the same time.