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# Paid Search for ETFs



A PRACTICAL  
GUIDE

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## A PRACTICAL GUIDE







When it comes to promoting your ETFs (Exchange Traded Funds) with digital marketing, much of the overall campaign strategy, messaging, and channels will depend on who exactly your primary target market is. For example, it could make a lot of sense to use Reddit Advertising when trying to reach DIY investors, while a social ad platform like LinkedIn would be better suited to reach financial professionals (ex: Advisors). With that said - the one advertising channel that will almost certainly be a good fit regardless of your target market is Paid Search, aka SEM (Search Engine Marketing).

Building out and managing comprehensive Paid Search ad campaigns for ETFs can be a major undertaking.

Having run 100+ Paid Search campaigns for 20+ ETFs, we've put together 4 key considerations that should be top of mind when building out new campaigns:

### In this guide:

-  1. Choosing The Right Platforms
-  2. Building A Campaign Structure
-  3. Compliance-Friendly Ad Copy
-  4. Smart Conversion Tracking



## 1. Choosing The Right Platforms

Regardless of industry, Google Ads is typically the go-to ad platform for Paid Search marketers. The expression “Just Google It” exists for a reason - Google has clearly established themselves as the default search engine in the minds of the majority of the population. Beyond the most obvious benefit of advertising your ETF on Google: large reach, additional benefits of advertising on Google include integrations with other Google products (ex: GA4, YouTube),

integrations with CRMs (ex: HubSpot), and detailed planning tools which give data on search volume & competition levels for any keywords you’re interested in targeting.

Another Paid Search focused ad platform that we have been very bullish on the past few years has been Microsoft Advertising. Most marketers still refer to Microsoft Advertising simply as “Bing Ads”, although technically Microsoft



Advertising allows brands to run search ads on Bing, Yahoo, AOL, and other partner search engines. Bing specifically has become the default search engine on Windows devices, which has helped maintain a solid user base of the search engine in recent years.

Reasons why Microsoft advertising can potentially be a good platform to promote ETFs include:

**A**

The average Bing user is older and more affluent than the average Google user. This lines up well with the target market of many companies in the financial industry as older audiences tend to have a higher net worth/more investments etc. Although it should be noted that this could be a challenge when it comes to promoting certain types of ETFs (ex: Crypto related).

**B**

ETF advertisers can typically benefit from significantly lower advertising costs than on Google due to a lower level of advertiser competition. For example, a recent ETF campaign we ran had CPCs 4x cheaper on Microsoft when compared to Google, targeting the exact same keywords!

**C**

Because Microsoft also owns LinkedIn, Microsoft Search Ads offers a LinkedIn audience integration where employment related data (ex: company industry) can be layered into campaigns. This can be particularly useful for ETF companies who value getting in front of financial professionals.



## □ □ 2. Building a Campaign □ □ Structure

Before selecting the keywords to target, writing ad copy, and uploading campaigns, a very important step to set yourself up for success is building out a comprehensive campaign structure for your ETFs. We've identified four key types of search campaigns for ETFs to consider, and while they might not all make sense for every ETF, this is a solid place to start:

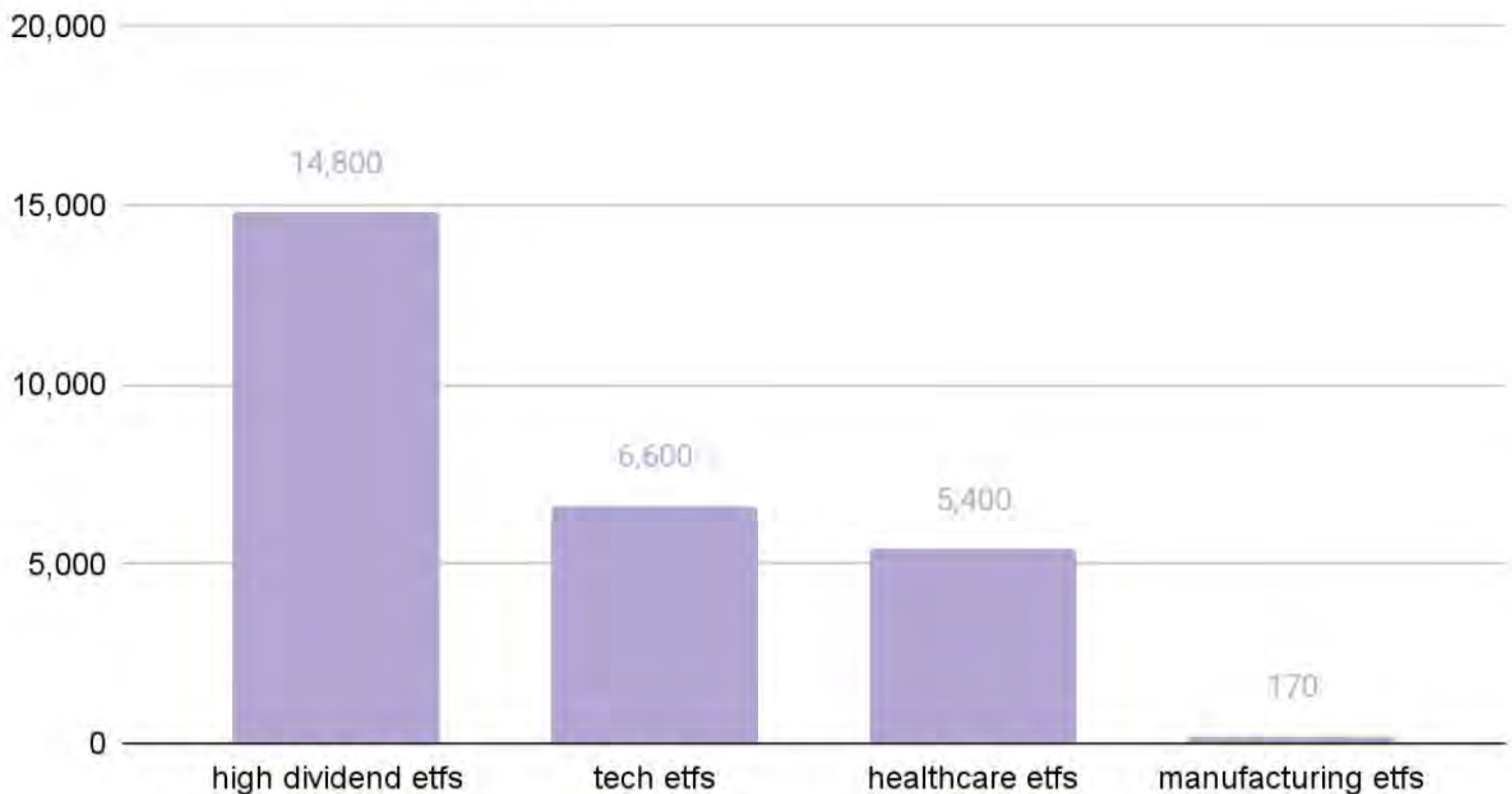
### a) Category Campaigns

We define category campaigns in the context of ETF marketing as targeting people searching for specific types of funds that are closely related to the ETF you are promoting. For example if you're promoting an ETF with a high yield, you could target people searching for "dividend etfs" or "high yield etfs". This also works well when promoting thematic ETFs, because it allows you to target people who are "sold" on the investment sector/theme and are actively searching for ETFs (ex: "healthcare ETFs").

#### ⚡ Challenge

While these types of campaigns are often the top-performing campaigns in our ad accounts, some types of ETFs may have very limited related search volume if it's not as well known of a category. For example, the keyword "manufacturing etfs" has less than 500 searches per month on Google in the USA. This limits the scale of category campaigns in comparison to other types of ETFs that have more search volume (ex: "high dividend etf" at 15K searches/month):

## Searches/Month (USA)



## b) Competitor Campaigns

Another way of finding investors who are actively searching for related ETFs is to directly target the names of competing/related ETFs. This can be particularly effective for ETFs that are a part of very competitive ETF categories where there is a lot of search volume. For example if you are promoting a small cap ETF, you could target not just other fund names (ex: "iShares Russell 2000 ETF"), but the actual tickers of these funds (ex: "IWM etf/ IWM fund/IWM stock"). It's very important in the ad copy (and landing pages) to make a clear differentiator between your fund and the fund these people are searching for in order to generate consideration to buy.

### ⚡ Challenge

The downside of bidding on competitor fund names & tickers is that they tend to be more expensive than category keywords. Furthermore, CTRs will typically lag behind other campaigns as the consumers already have a specific ETF in mind when performing their search.

## c) Holdings Campaigns

Depending on the ETF, one way that could significantly expand your reach beyond category & competitor keywords is to test out targeting people searching for the fund names of the top holdings within your ETF. This typically opens up keyword targets with 10x+ more search volume than other campaigns - to put it into perspective, there are over 1 million searches per month for "msft stock"! This can be an effective way of getting your fund in front of people who are already invested in some of the key holdings within your ETFs.

### ⚡ Challenge

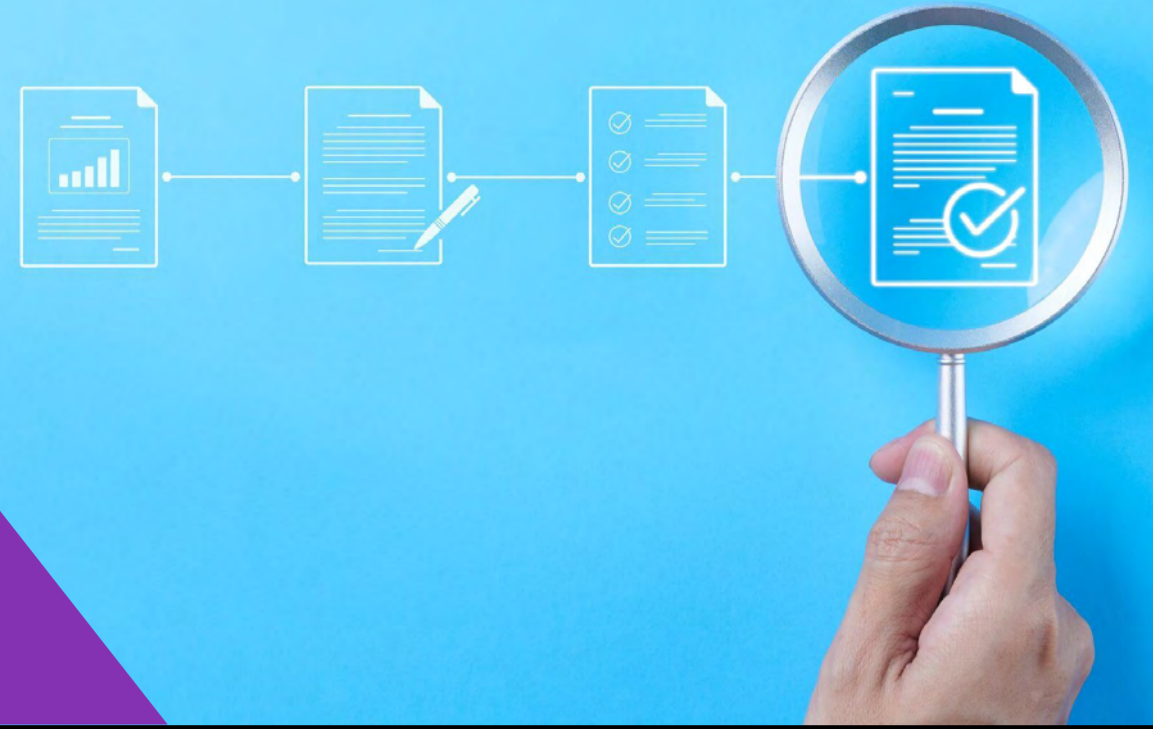
One potential hurdle of targeting stock names is that these investors are actively searching for single stocks, not ETFs. This means that the campaign landing page has to do a good job of educating the reader on the concept of ETFs, in addition to showcasing why this particular ETF is an attractive option for investors interested/invested in a certain stock.

## d) People Campaigns

Perhaps the most "outside the box" campaign concept on this list is using people's names as the keywords you are targeting. No - not just any names (obviously), but if you have a member of your organization (ex: a fund manager) who happens to have a noteworthy existing following on social media or who is known via high profile media appearances, it could be a very effective strategy to target people searching for this person with ads that showcase your fund they are managing.

### ⚡ Challenge

This strategy is only possible if you have someone on your team that has significant search volume online. Furthermore, hopefully this person has a name that's not TOO common, which would lead to targeting people searching for other people with the same name.



### 3. Compliance-Friendly Ad Copy

One area that makes the financial industry more challenging than others to advertise within is that there are often very strict compliance-related guidelines to follow when writing ad copy. It's very important to ensure that no promises/guarantees are being made within the ad copy since there are no guarantees when it comes to the stock market. So for example instead of saying "Fund XYZ provides long term capital appreciation...", the copy could be framed as "Fund XYZ seeks to provide long term capital appreciation...". An added complexity to running compliant-friendly SEM copy is that Google Ads has now migrated completely to running Responsive Search Ads. How these ads work is that advertisers provide Google with a few headlines & descriptions, and Google will then "mix and match" the combinations to find out what combinations work best.

While this sounds great in theory, in reality it could lead to an ad displaying like this if not executed properly:

Ad · [www.example.com](http://www.example.com) ⓘ  
[Learn More About \\$ETF | Consider \\$ETF | \\$ETF On The TSX](#)

Not only can this lead to a terrible ad experience/poor campaign results, but letting Google have full control over how your ad can appear could also result in running ads that were not approved at all by compliance. Our agency approach to Responsive Search Ads within the financial industry involves pinning headlines/descriptions where necessary and running multiple ads per ad group in order to maintain compliance while still being able to A/B test different messaging.





## 4. Smart Conversion Tracking

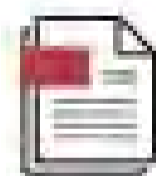
A major challenge to advertising publicly traded funds like ETFs is the absence of “purchase data” that can be attributed back to marketing efforts. This is especially true in DIY-investor focused marketing, where it’s not generally possible to find out if someone invested into your ETF after coming to your website, and if they did - how much they invested & will invest over the future. Because of this, Paid Search campaigns cannot be tracked & optimized for ROAS to the same accuracy that other industries can, such as ecommerce stores selling physical goods..

With that said, simply trying to maximize clicks to your ETF pages on your website and hoping for the

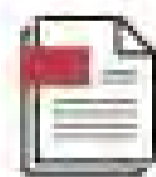
best is not a sufficient optimization strategy. Before launching a new Paid Search campaign, it’s important to identify actions on your fund page/website that visitors can take which indicates purchase intent. Examples of these types of actions include:

- Fact sheet downloads/other fund documents
- ETF overview video views
- Newsletter signups
- Outbound “where to buy” clicks (ex: to Robinhood, Fidelity, etc.)

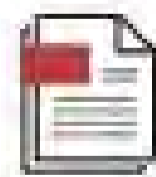
### DOCUMENTS



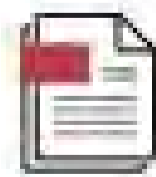
[Fact Sheet 2024](#)



[Fund Review 2024](#)



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[Semi-Annual Report](#)



Setting up events for all these actions within your website analytics and marking them as Paid Search “conversions” will give you a much stronger indication of which campaigns/keywords/ads etc. are driving quality traffic, which will allow for more sophisticated campaign optimization than simply maximizing clicks to your website.

These 4 considerations help set a solid foundation for promoting your ETFs via Paid Search, however they are only the beginning steps to help lead to a high performing campaign! While every ETF is unique and requires tailored strategies, we can use our experience and learnings to help any company effectively market their ETFs online. If you have tried search marketing in the past without success, that doesn't mean it can't be successful in the future - with the right partner.

[Get in touch with us today](#) and we'd be happy to discuss our ideas for leveraging Paid Search (and other digital marketing channels) to promote your ETFs!

