



proprietary

POV: GOOGLE SAYS NO MORE
EXCEPTIONS FOR PHARMA PAID SEARCH
ADS

JUNE 2015



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

On June 17, 2015, Google sent notifications to its major agency partners, including Intouch Solutions, alerting them to significant ad policy changes that directly impact pharma paid search advertising. Google will no longer maintain two of its popular pharmaceutical custom ad units — black-box and vanity URLs — and announced deadlines for the cessation of each ad format.

1. On **July 20, 2015**, Google will remove all ads using the current pharma black-box ad format due to system changes for [Upgraded URLs](#) that will not be able to support this format.

Current black-box format: Dedicated line of copy; additional hyperlink highlighted in yellow:

ENBREL® (etanercept)
Ad www.enbrel.com/ ▾
Get Important Information About ENBREL. Visit the Official Site.
Click to see full safety and prescribing information, including boxed warning. [More info](#)

2. On **January 12, 2016**, the current pharma vanity URL ad format will no longer be considered compliant with Google's advertising policies.

Current vanity URL Format: Users who click on this ad are taken to a branded website:

Common RA Symptoms
Ad www.ra-prescription-treatment.com/ ▾
Read About Common Rheumatoid Arthritis Symptoms and a Treatment

While this update is specifically for the Google search engine, Intouch expects other search engines, such as Yahoo! and Bing, to quickly adopt similar policy changes.

This POV provides recommended next steps for updating pharma paid search campaigns affected by these changes.



BLACK-BOX ADS

Pharmaceutical companies' black-box ad units will be eliminated on July 20, 2015. This is due to Google's major URL infrastructure change, which is a back-end update that is scheduled for next month. The new URL structure will no longer be able to support this format. This update will apply across platforms and devices for all search text ads.

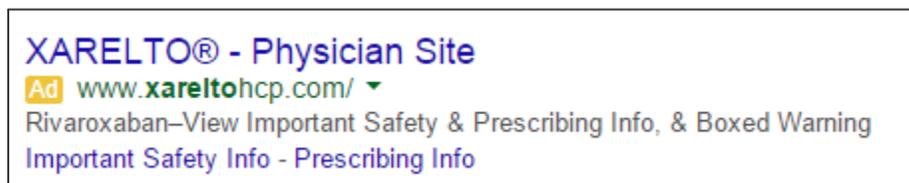
RECOMMENDATION

Intouch will immediately begin to work with all black-box client brands currently running (or planning to run) paid search, utilizing this format to implement the following changes:

- + Ads will be converted to the standard text ad unit, making use of the reminder-like format.
- + Boxed warning notification will still be included in the paid search ads but will live in the ad copy itself, as well as within ad extensions.
 - If the brand name is too long and boxed warning and prescribing information cannot fit in the standard text ad copy, then it will only live in various ad extensions.

Example #1: XARELTO® is a black-box brand currently utilizing standard paid search text ads without the Google black-box ad format. Instead, the ad copy itself contains the direction “View Important Safety & Prescribing Info & Boxed Warning” and links to a page where the important safety information is prominent. Additionally, this ad includes the ISI and PI as sitelinks that take users to a webpage dedicated to the safety information and to a PDF of the PI, respectively.

Sample ad currently running for XARELTO:



Example #2: If the brand and generic name is long and the language directing users to the boxed warning and prescribing information cannot fit in the ad copy, then some or all of that direction will be included in the sitelinks themselves and their descriptions.



[Official Site \[Drug Name\]](#)

[Ad](#) [www.drug.com/](#)

[Drug & Full Generic Name Here] View Full Safety & Boxed Warning.

Visit Today - Safety & Side Effects - View Boxed Warning Info

[View Prescribing Info](#)

[\[Ad Callout Here\]](#)

Visit to read full PI, including
boxed warning.

[\[Insert another brand initiative
and go directly to that page.\]](#)

Mobile devices currently cannot support sitelink descriptions and will only include the sitelink headline, so the direction in the headline must be clear. For example:



VANITY URLS

Leveraging vanity URLs for unbranded paid search advertisements has been a long-time preference of pharmaceutical marketers. This ad unit allows mention of a condition within the ad copy (which cannot be done in a reminder ad) and directs users to the product website at brand.com, but an unbranded, vanity display URL is placed within the ad itself. Google has been making an exception for the pharmaceutical industry to its general policy prohibiting this practice. But that exception will end starting January 12, 2016.

This update will apply across platforms and devices — for all search text ads, as well as for Google Display network text ads.



RECOMMENDATION

To continue to run unbranded paid search ads that include condition information, Google is providing three different options in the display URL field. It is important to note that Google representatives have informed Intouch that these formats are not currently supported and still need to be implemented. These options are expected to be ready in plenty of time for the January 12 deadline and include:

- + BusinessName.com
- + Business Name (without the .com)
- + Static text that reads: "Prescription Treatment Website" or "Prescription Device Website"

Examples how the three different options will display, provided by Google:

Variant 1:

Diabetes Type 2 Symptoms
Ad www.example.com ▾
Learn about symptoms and a Rx treatment.

Variant 2:

Diabetes Type 2 Symptoms
Ad Example ▾
Learn about symptoms and a Rx treatment.

Variant 3:

Diabetes Type 2 Symptoms
Ad Prescription treatment website ▾
Learn about symptoms and a Rx treatment.

When a user clicks on the ad, they will be directed to the destination URL provided for the ad text (which can be the branded website). Google is strongly recommending getting all three options reviewed and approved through a company's regulatory process, though some companies might decide against using any of the three options.



CONCLUSION

Intouch Solutions has already begun working with clients affected by these changes. In the upcoming week, all of the black-box brands currently running paid search ads will be redeveloped in the new standard text ad format and submitted for approval.

Since Google has said the vanity URL update will not be ready for implementation before the January 12 deadline, no immediate action is needed. Intouch plans to revise those effected advertisements in early August and then submit them for approval.

Although these changes do impact the majority of pharmaceutical paid search campaigns, Google has suggested reasonable alternatives with clearly defined deadlines, and once implemented, we do not expect a major impact to campaign performance. We will continue to monitor and analyze new information that becomes available, including if other search engines follow Google's lead.

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