

# Becoming a Google Certified Partner

A Beginners Guide

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# Introduction

## Why Certification is Important

Google certification is an important step -- both for individuals and for agencies -- as they mature, develop, and extend their professional capabilities.

There are many direct benefits of attaining Google Certified Partner status, both tangible and intangible. Tangible benefits include the ability to proudly display the "Google Certified Partners" logo on one's web site for the world to see, having one's firm included in an official list of Certified people and agencies curated by Google, and most importantly -- the confidence that comes from taking and passing a very difficult set of exams.

There are indirect benefits as well. Agency staff who've passed the exam can begin to think of themselves as mentors, increasing team efficiency and knowledge sharing. They can contribute more when dialoging with clients and more quickly assimilate knowledge about the many new ad products that Google is continually rolling out, and about how such products can be used creatively on the client's behalf.



Someday, the important best practices for running effective online campaigns may be taught in universities and business schools. Right now, however, the best way to acquire this kind of real-world, hands-on information is to go right to the source, which of course is Google. Still, because the certification program can be a bit mysterious to the newcomer, we created this e-book to help people through the process.

## How This E-book is Organized

Because Certification is something that both individuals and agencies can achieve, we first begin with a series of questions and answers that an individual would likely ask about the program. Then we'll broaden the frame a bit and discuss the role that Certification plays in the business development process and how certification benefits can accrue to an agency. We'll tighten the frame again, zooming into what it's like to actually take the exam with a Q&A session with a person who actually took the exam, and close with a list of resources you can use to quickly learn more about the program.



# CHAPTER ONE

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## GOOGLE CERTIFIED PARTNERS QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS



### ***What is the Google Certified Partners Program?***

The Google Certified Partners program is [a certification program](#) that exists for both individuals and agencies. Sponsored by Google, the Partners program supports best practices for various Google products, including AdWords and Analytics.

### ***Why would I want to get Google AdWords Certified?***

The AdWords Certifications ensures that you're familiar with Google's current best practices in AdWords management. Not only will you be better at managing AdWords accounts and serving clients better; you'll be able to list your certification as a distinguished professional certification. Being AdWords-certified is an essential step in the journey of any SEM professional. You can also help your agency achieve [Partner Status](#).

### ***What will the program teach me?***

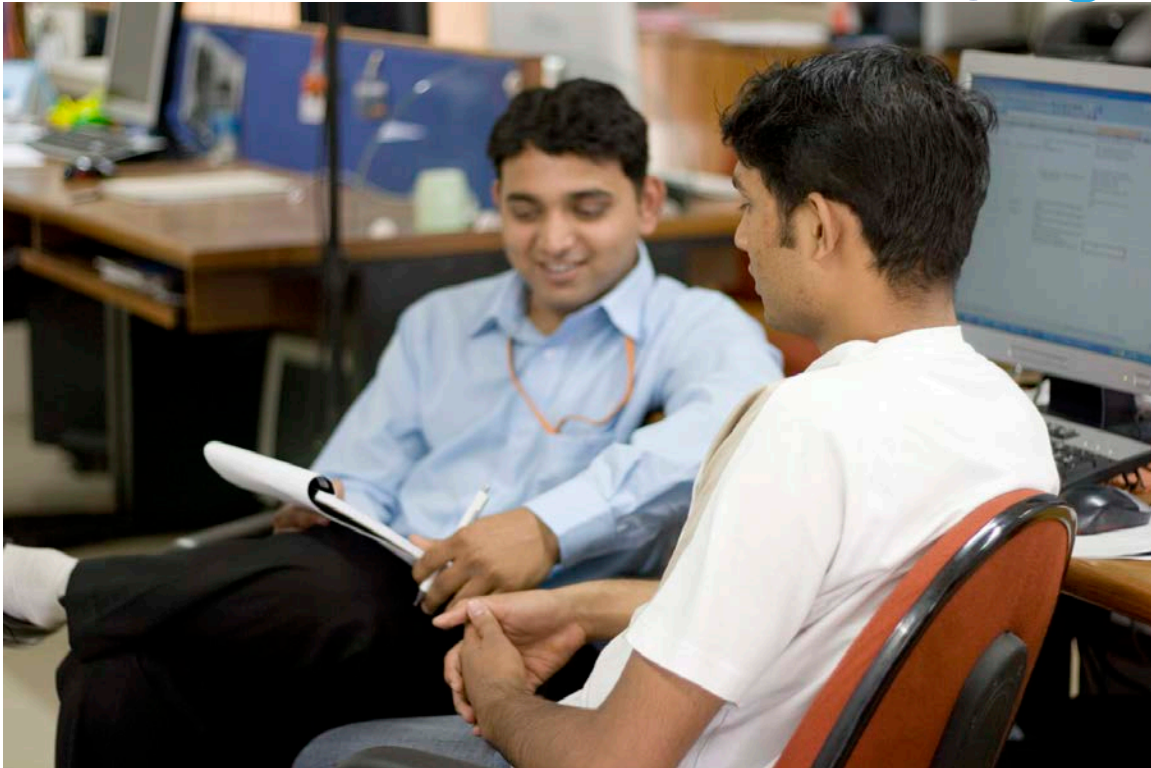
The Fundamentals exam will teach you best practices for managing Google AdWords. There is no such a thing as a "practice" account, but an account can be created that is not active (i.e., no keyword bids are entered.) The best practice is to actually manage an account with some money in it, but you don't need to spend a huge amount of money in order to gain valuable experience managing AdWords, and Google offers special [AdWords coupon deals](#).

### ***What do I need to join the [Google Certified Partners program](#)?***

In order to join as an individual, you'll need to establish a Gmail account, establish a My Client Center account, and make sure that your Gmail account is linked to your MCC (My Client Center) account.

### ***What is a My Client Center account?***

[MyClient Center](#) is the front end that allows you to monitor multiple AdWords accounts and is the interface normally used by an agency or consultant when monitoring client accounts for AdWords. Much of your AdWords work will be taking place within the MCC interface.



### ***What certifications are available?***

Currently, there are several Google Partners certification exams, including:

- **Fundamentals:** This exam, usually taken first, covers the basics of AdWords and online advertising, as well as account management.
- **Advanced Search:** This covers intermediate to advanced-level best practices for AdWords campaign management.
- **Advanced Display:** Coverage of advertising on YouTube and the Google Display Network.
- **Video Advertising:** Covers basic and advanced concepts for the YouTube and Google Display networks, such as ad formats, targeting, and reporting.
- **[Analytics](#):** Google also offers the Google Analytics Individual Qualification test. This is an excellent addition to the resume of any digital marketer, especially SEO specialists.



### ***Does the program cost money?***

No. The program is currently free. There was once a \$50 charge, but Google made the program free as of September 30<sup>th</sup>, 2013.

### ***What training is available? How many hours should I study for the exams?***

Google offers an [extensive library of study materials](#) for each of the exams. Our staff here at Didit recommends that a total of **30 hours** be devoted to each individual exam. Usually, devoting 1 hour a day to a module is a good pace, allowing a month of dedicated study to prepare for the Fundamentals exam. The Fundamentals exam requires that 90 questions be answered with an 85% pass mark.

### ***Are there sample questions available to study?***

Yes! You can find a sample test [right here](#).

### ***Should I get tutoring help?***

If you're at an agency, we recommend that you work with your management – they may already have a procedure as part of the staff development process.

### ***What are the best blogs, communities and other resources for Google AdWords certification?***

The best source for info on any of the Google AdWords certifications programs is the [Google Partners Community](#). There are also many 3<sup>rd</sup> party blogs that cover AdWords certification from many angles. Don't forget the [Reddit](#) and [Google Plus](#) communities for this topic.

### ***Can Non-US Citizens take the Google Certification Exams?***

Because one only needs a Gmail address to sign up with Google Partners, non-US Citizens can indeed take the exams. The ability to transact via AdSense requires a US tax ID number, but there are a number of alternative networks set up for non-US citizens interested in using AdSense.





### ***How often do I need to renew my certification?***

Normally, Google certifications are good for one year, after which they need to be renewed.

### ***How do I get coupons for AdWords?***

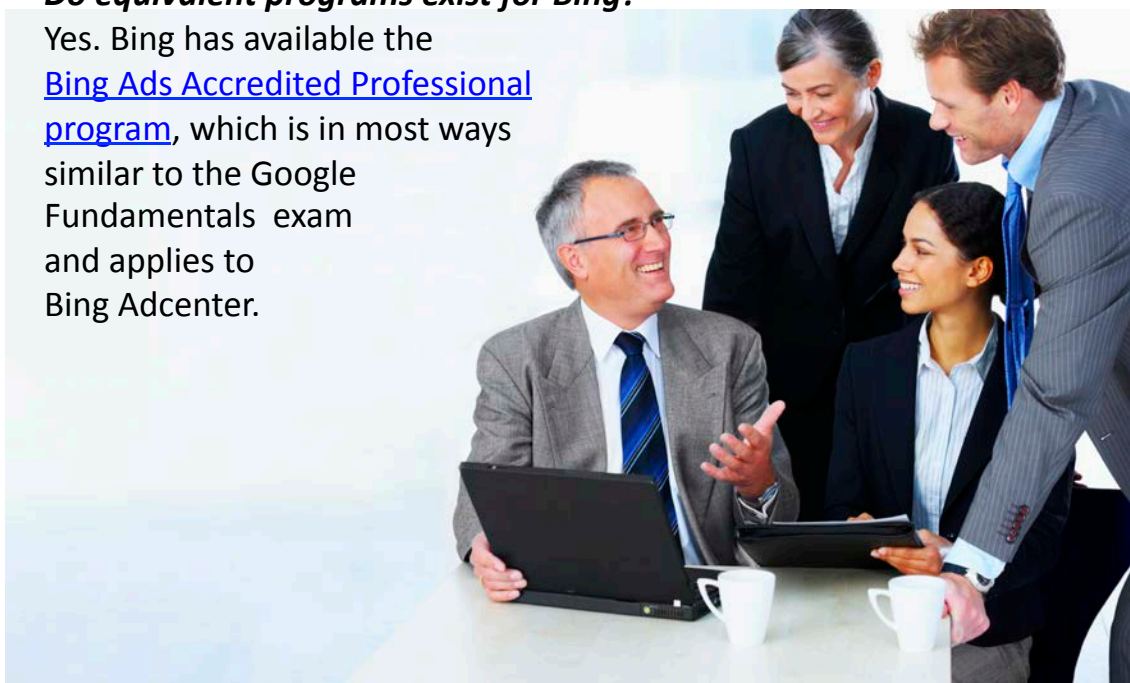
Google regularly offers promotions of AdWords credits to help new customers launch in AdWords. You can find offers [here](#), and members of the Partners program also receive other offers regularly. These credits can either be used for client accounts or for your own account, and are a great way to start making AdWords buys and learning PPC advertising using real dollars, all courtesy of Google.

### ***What communities exist to support Google partners?***

Our favorite is the [Google Partners-North America community on Google Plus](#). This community is heavily participated in by program members, and includes success stories, client challenges, **Hangouts On Air** and articles that can help any AdWords expert stay on top of their game.

### ***Do equivalent programs exist for Bing?***

Yes. Bing has available the [Bing Ads Accredited Professional program](#), which is in most ways similar to the Google Fundamentals exam and applies to Bing Adcenter.





# CHAPTER TWO

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## CERTIFICATION: CERTIFICATION'S ROLE IN BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT



There is no question that Certification can help to keep an agency's new business pipeline supplied with new, qualified prospects. Some of these prospects may be impressed by the fact that the Google Certified Partner logo is displayed on the agency's site. But a more direct way to reach qualified traffic is through Google's own database of approved Partners.

Here's how the process works: once certification is achieved, the agency is listed in the Google Partner's database available at <https://www.google.com/partners/> (Figure 1).

Users of the site clicking on the Find Partner link go to a page where they can directly enter their criteria (including monthly spend level, geographic location, language targeting, and other criteria) (Figure 2), and a list of eligible Partners is produced (Figure 3). On this page, users can click the "Contact" link. If "Contact" is selected, a window will appear providing a way to send e-mail directly to the Partner (Figure 4).



Figure 1



Google Search for partners by name

Partners

**Any industry**  
Your industries  
Specific industries

**Any service offered**  
I want help with

Reset search

Tell us a little about your requirements.

Monthly budget: 500 US Dollar

Targeting: English United States

Location: United States

Map of the United States showing partner locations marked with red pins.

Here are a few partners that meet your requirements:

Figure 2

Google Didit

Partners

**Any industry**  
**Your industries**  
media, travel, etc. Go

**Any service offered**  
I want help with...

☒ Advanced AdWords ...  
☒ Advertising on Go...  
☒ An enhanced websi...  
☒ An online marketi...  
☒ Mobile and Video ...

Reset search

Tell us a little about your requirements.

Monthly budget: US Dollar

Targeting: Select one Select one

Location: Enter a city, state, or country

Here are a few partners that meet your requirements:

**Didit** [View profile](#) [CONTACT](#)

Didit is a privately held industry pioneer in Digital Marketing founded in 1996, until most recently, specializing in search engine marketing. Didit developed its proprietary Maestro search and auction-based display campaign optimization technology combining now with recent advances in the application of "Big Data" to SEM and display campaigns. In August 2012, Didit expanded its service offerin...

**Industries**

- Business-to-Business
- Consumer Goods
- Education
- Financial Services
- Media and entertainment
- [2 more...](#)

**Services**

- Advanced AdWords support
- Advertising on Google
- An enhanced website
- An online marketing plan
- Mobile and Video Ads

Google makes no promises or representations about the performance or quality of any of the partners listed in the Partner Search Engine. Google doesn't charge for inclusion in this directory or accept payment for better placement

Figure 3



**Contact Didit**

Almost there! We need a little more information to help this partner contact you directly.

Email

Your name (optional)

Company name (optional)

Website (optional)

500 USD

Primary phone number

Use this space to include any additional information you want the agency to know about - like special advertising requirements or additional contact information.

1007

Type the text

Privacy & Terms

☐ Google may contact me with occasional help and tips about AdWords or related promotions.

You can opt out of these emails at any time.

Google will handle your information in accordance with our [privacy policy](#).

submit Cancel

Figure 4

There is no doubt that leads that come to an agency's site via the Google Partner's site are highly qualified. Eric Wiggins, Group Account Director at Didit, has this to say: "When we pitch, the Certified Partner Status is a huge plus. A huge amount of trust and confidence comes with it – you have the entire Google brand behind you when you have the Certified Partner badge on your web page."

Didit Business Development Manager Bill Salone reports this: "Usually, presentations with leads that I get through the Certified Partner program have a great grasp of their business goals and are well-educated on search as well as specific Google products. We've never had any problem discussing goals and can engage with clients on high level AdWords concepts with little trouble. Being part of the program is absolutely a competitive advantage."



Beyond the advantages of getting leads directly through the Google Partner's site, leads can be obtained via events associated with the program. Eric Enge, Google+ subject matter expert and Certified Partner, hosts his own events, including Hangouts on Air, in which he discusses Google subject matter and networks with Partner firms and prospects. These events are content-rich and offer value to attendees. Google itself also sponsors several Google Partner events in various regions. Having direct connections to subject matter leaders and developers inside of Google as well as the Partner community lets agencies have an edge over non-partner firms in both training and business development.

The Certified Partner program attracts higher quality leads, even through non-program channels. Use of the Certified Partner Badge also has SEO effects, through authorship and the Knowledge Graph.





# CHAPTER THREE

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## WHAT AGENCIES NEED TO KNOW ABOUT CERTIFICATION





In our prior section, we talked about the benefits of Google Certified Partner status from the agency standpoint. Now let's talk about the process of getting your employees individually certified.

Whether you're a 5-person agency, where everyone wears different hats, or are part of a firm with several hundred people, there are some stumbling blocks and issues that you'll need to watch out for. Adam Steinberg, Strategist, and Eric Wiggins chatted with me about some of the processes we use here at Didit to walk people through certification effectively.

Adam notes that it usually takes around 15 hours of study to prepare for the Fundamentals exam. This exam is usually taken by staffers with between 1 to 2 years of experience, after being mentored and coached by senior members of their team. In order for an entire agency to qualify as a Certified Partner agency, only one staff member needs certification. However, we recommend that more than one member of your PPC team become certified, both for increased knowledge-sharing and to provide redundancy.

Adam also notes that the exam questions are similar to SAT questions, in that they are formatted to trick skimmers and folks who don't study into making the wrong choices. 1 out of 4 of the questions are of this type, so be careful. If you've studied, have in-depth PPC experience, and take your time, there should be no problems. Serious study should enable you to navigate the test without any issues.







# What Agencies Will Need

Google breaks out the steps to achieving partner status [here](#). In order to qualify, agencies need:

- At least \$10,000 in ad spend over the past 90 days, with some spend activity within the last 60 days
- One agency employee to be AdWords certified
- A My Client Center (MCC) account, a completed Google profile, and a company website
- Implementation of Google Adwords best practices.
- We presume that you're in compliance with Google's current policy guidelines. However, it's always a good idea to review the guidelines at the [Adwords Policy Center](#) to make sure that you're up to date on Google's latest policy changes.





# CHAPTER FOUR

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## NOTES FROM EXAM-TAKERS

We interviewed **Adam Steinberg**, Strategist, and **Eric Wiggins**, Group Account Director at Didit, about the actual mechanics of taking the Fundamentals exam.



***How long does an employee work at Didit before they take the GCP AdWords fundamentals exam?***

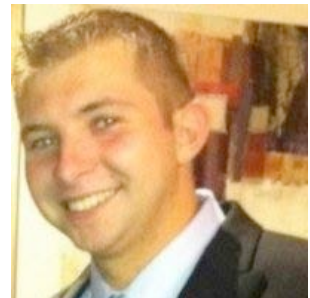
Adam Steinberg: “Usually about one year, but this depends on availability, work flow, and bandwidth. Some of our employees take the test after only 3 months at Didit, but our policy is that all of our staff have taken the AdWords fundamentals exam after one year.”



*Eric Wiggins*

***How do you prepare an employee for the exam?***

Eric Wiggins: “Google already has a wealth of training materials, and Didit employees already have hands-on access to accounts under the guidance of certified senior employees. We usually set an employee up with a mentor who is certified and has already passed the exam, although we also conduct exam training in classroom settings as well.”



*Adam Steinberg*

***Some have argued that the exam doesn't reflect the realities of Google's constantly changing standards concerning Quality Score and other elements of AdWords management, and that it's a waste of time.***

Eric Wiggins: “I wouldn't want to work at any agency that had that attitude. In order to pass the Fundamentals exams, one needs to be on top of changes in the Google AdWords product. Our staff pays close attention to discussions concerning PPC in general and AdWords in particular on blogs, forums such as Google Plus and Reddit, as well as from the Google Partner's program. We make sure that our employees get the time they need to stay up on their training. This pays off for us – employees who carry out best practices are less likely to make errors, serve our clients better, and perform better.”

***Share with us some pitfalls from your personal experience that people taking the test should watch out for.***



Adam Steinberg: “Well – the exam does take 90 minutes. I made sure that I had been studying up for around a total of 30 hours over the course of a month, while reviewing material with my partner. The test itself isn’t just rote memorization of factoids – they’re real problems that can be found in an agency environment. Similar to standardized tests such as the SATs, there are trick questions that are laid into the test. Pay attention, take your time, and don’t panic. If you’ve been studying and working with the official Google videos and materials, you’ll do fine.”

***What is your opinion on the role that the exams play in staff development?***

Eric Wiggins: “Here at Didit, we want the best account people we can get. While our Maestro technology is the best in the business, our other real strength is our people. We’ve had clients leave us because they thought they could get a cheaper deal, but come back because our excellent service saved them money in the long run. An essential component to getting them that excellent service is a culture of mentorship and staff development. By showing our staff that their expertise and development are paramount to us, we have retained high quality staff for our clients.”



# CHAPTER FIVE

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## CERTIFICATION RESOURCES



Here is a list of links and resources to help you and your agency achieve Google Certified Partner status.

[Google Partners-North America community on Google Plus](#)

The best social media community for Google Partners in North America. Communities for different regions also exist. Many tactical articles, client success stories, and other great content are posted daily to this group.

[Bing Ads Accredited Professional program](#)

Bing's parallel program to Google AdWords certification.

[Google Partners Certifications](#)

Official Google resource detailing Certification exams policies, requirements, and benefits.

[Google Certified Partners program](#)

An article with official information from Google on how to join Google Partners, either as an individual or as an agency.

[My Client Center](#)

An article that details My Client Center (MCC), the Google client management front end for AdWords.

[Google Analytics training and certification](#)

An official Google portal to the Google Analytics Certification exam.



### [Reddit](#)

The Reddit /PPC community often has important threads on AdWord and AdWords certification, including news and best practices.

### [AdWords Coupons](#)

Excellent for your new customers or if you're exploring AdWords yourself. These are AdWords credits that can be applied towards AdWords accounts.

### [Adwords Policy Center](#)

Everyone who works with AdWords should keep up to date with current AdWords policies. Includes guidelines and best practices.

### [Certified Partner Search](#)

The portal where prospects search the Google Certified Partner agency list for GCP agencies in their area.

# Final Exam





# About the Author



Chris Bell writes content of all types for Didit. Formerly a professional in the financial services space, Chris made the transition into digital marketing in 2011 and has been living the digital life ever since. Chris has an MBA in Media Management, graduating from the Metropolitan College of New York in 2005. He also sat on the board of directors for Soft Skull Press between 1997 and 2005. Chris does independent consulting on a variety of media projects. Finally, he DJs his own streaming music show.





# About Didit

**A digital marketing leader since 1996, Didit provides full-service online advertising and marketing services with award-winning expertise and innovation.**



Recognized as a 2007 Inc. 500, Deloitte Fast 50 and Fast 500 company, Didit continues to lead the evolution of auctioned media management and online marketing with keen insight, technological know-how and a passion for advancing search and online media.

Didit's aptitude for strategic planning, incorporating best-of-breed technology and advanced analytics, delivers unmatched results for more than 100 clients across all major verticals. Our full-service approach applies multi-faceted skill sets, combining top-tier SEM and SEO management, implementing Google PLAs and Comparison Shopping Engine feeds, and devising important Social Media strategies that create a holistic synergy of online marketing tools.



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**Looking for a Google Certified  
Partner for your SEM campaign?**

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**CONTACT DIDIT**