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It's good to see Google investing in its training programme with the new GAP fundamentals exam. It recognises the importance of training search professionals, who play a large part in selling to and influencing advertisers.

By revisiting the exam Google is helping retrain the paid search workforce and focus these professionals on strategy as well as improved tactics that will make paid search work harder as an advertising channel, which is good for agencies and Google alike. While it does cost to take the exam, Google is handing out vouchers to agencies, showing it understands that the long-term value of education is more important than a quick buck.

The curriculum of the test doesn't look much different; it's the content that has changed. Google says, "The new fundamentals exam is based on a new curriculum which is designed to be more rigorous and strategy-oriented." In addition, the passing score is higher than the previous exam, at 85% as opposed to 75%.

Again I applaud the raising of the bar. It's important for the industry that every agency which says it can do paid search actually knows why being number one isn't always the best strategy and that long-tail keywords can convert your cheapest sales. It's designed to improve the level of paid search competence across all agencies. It has the potential to raise the importance of the search marketer in the eyes of the client.

Or does it? I'm never impressed when a recruiter sends my way a paid search professional's CV highlighting that they're GAP qualified. In the end the exam is a multiple-choice test based on a set curriculum. Learning it, testing yourself a few times and then passing the test shows only an average level of intelligence. Experience is what counts. Doing the hard graft of optimisation manually is what will impress on a CV. No multiple-choice exam can teach you how to sell in a campaign to meet a client's objectives or how to maintain a great client relationship.

Or can it? A section in the curriculum titled 'Maintaining client relationships' says, "Managing an online marketing campaign can require close attention and diligence. A qualified professional has experience and proficiency in creating AdWords campaigns, so they can save you time and resources by managing your campaign for you."

While Google will commendably raise the level of expertise at paid search agencies through this new exam, it still can't produce the perfect search marketer who knows how to balance technical and marketing expertise. That can only be learned from years of optimisation.