Paid Media Performance Report

U.S. ACA Lead Generation — 2023

Google Ads + Meta | Qualified-Call Acquisition | Performance Marketing

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1. Executive Summary

During the 2023 U.S. ACA operation, I managed performance acquisition across Google Ads and Meta with a primary focus on generating **qualified inbound calls at profitable acquisition costs**.

The operation evolved from a relatively low-scale acquisition into a substantially larger performance marketing system, with responsibility spanning:

- Campaign creation
- Budget allocation
- Daily optimization
- Account scaling
- Creative testing
- Funnel testing
- Performance reporting
- Tracking analysis
- Account management
- Training junior media buyers

The operation ultimately generated approximately the following:

KPI	2023 Result
Ringba-reported revenue	**$4.41M**
Paid media spend	**~$3.3M**
Incoming calls	**470,522**
Paid calls	**147,617**
Converted calls	**64,287**
Reported ROI	**~35%**
Average call length	**2:26**

Peak connected-call capacity	**~100 concurrent/live-call capacity**

The operation demonstrated a significant improvement in acquisition efficiency:

CPA: ~$220 → < $90

while simultaneously increasing:

Monthly spend: ~$7K → $30K–$60K

and:

Monthly calls: ~2K → 50K–70K

The performance improvement was not driven by a single optimization.

It came from combining:

Audience testing + creative testing + funnel optimization + controlled scaling + account-level management + disciplined measurement.

The most important management lesson from the operation was that **performance stability became increasingly important as spend and account complexity increased**.

At scale, the objective was not simply to spend more.

It was to determine:

> **Where additional spend could be deployed without destroying acquisition economics or call quality.**

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2. Business Context

The operation focused on generating inbound calls from consumers interested in Affordable Care Act health-insurance options in the United States.

The acquisition model was fundamentally different from a conventional e-commerce campaign.

The media buyer was not optimizing toward a simple website purchase.

The economic chain was:

Media Spend

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Traffic

↓

Calls

↓

Paid Calls

↓

Qualified / Converted Calls

↓

Buyer Revenue

↓

Profitability

This made downstream call economics particularly important.

A campaign could generate inexpensive traffic or a high volume of calls without necessarily generating economically valuable acquisition.

For this reason, performance decisions were primarily based on:

- CPA
- Profitability
- Call volume
- Call quality
- Revenue
- Conversion performance

Google's own conversion-measurement framework similarly emphasizes measuring valuable business actions and using conversion data to understand which campaigns, ads, and other components are driving valuable customer activity.

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3. Performance Overview

3.1 Full-Operation Results

Metric	Result

Ringba Revenue	**$4.41M**
Media Spend	**~$3.3M**
Incoming Calls	**470,522**
Paid Calls	**147,617**
Converted Calls	**64,287**
Reported ROI	**~35%**
Average Call Length	**2:26**

Revenue in this report is based on the available Ringba-reported revenue data.

Media spend was maintained separately from Ringba's Total Cost metric.

This distinction matters because the financial reporting layer and advertising-platform reporting layer did not always reconcile perfectly.

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4. Before vs. After Performance

One of the clearest indicators of the operation's development was the change in acquisition economics over time.

KPI	Before	After
CPA	~$220	**< $90**
Monthly Spend	~$7K	**$30K–$60K**
Monthly Calls	~2K	**50K–70K**
Monthly Revenue	~$8K	**>$500K**
Conversion	<10%	**~30%**
ROI	0–10%	**~35%**

The significance of the improvement was not simply lower CPA.

The operation achieved:

Lower CPA + greater volume + higher conversion + greater revenue + sustained profitability.

This represented a shift from relatively small-scale campaign buying toward a more systematic acquisition operation.

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5. Channel Strategy

Google Ads

Google represented approximately **90% of the operation**.

It was the primary acquisition channel and the principal source of scale.

Google was particularly important for:

- Intent-driven acquisition
- Consistent call generation
- Scaling established campaigns
- Controlling acquisition economics
- Identifying high-value search environments

The historical data available today does not allow a sufficiently reliable reconstruction of the complete Google-versus-Meta financial split.

Therefore, this report intentionally does **not fabricate channel-level spend, revenue, CPA, or ROI figures**.

Meta

Meta represented a comparatively small portion of the operation.

It was used primarily as an additional acquisition environment and testing channel.

Its relative contribution was materially smaller than Google's, so the full-operation performance analysis is more representative than a platform-by-platform financial comparison.

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6. Acquisition Optimization Framework

The operation was built around three interconnected variables:

Audience × Funnel × Economics

Rather than treating audience targeting as the only optimization lever, performance was evaluated across the entire acquisition path.

Audience

Testing included:

- Age groups
- Audience comparisons
- Campaign environments
- Account-level performance
- Broad versus more controlled intent

Funnel

Testing included:

- Different conversion endpoints
- Landing-page changes
- Removing unnecessary questions
- Reducing friction
- Improving the path from ad to call

Economics

Performance was ultimately evaluated using:

- CPA
- Call volume
- Qualified calls
- Revenue
- Profitability
- ROI

This prevented the team from treating inexpensive traffic as automatically valuable traffic.

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7. Creative Performance System

Creative testing was treated as an acquisition variable rather than an engagement exercise.

The operation tested formats, including:

- UGC

- Trending/native formats
- B-roll + voiceover
- Influencer-style creative
- Direct-response messaging
- New scripts
- New hooks
- New content concepts

The underlying principle was

> **Creative success was determined by the economic quality of the calls it generated, not by engagement metrics alone.**

A creative could receive strong engagement but still fail commercially if it produced poor-quality calls.

Conversely, a creative with relatively modest engagement could become valuable if it consistently generated profitable acquisition.

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8. Campaign Testing and Scaling

The operation used structured campaign environments to identify where a creative could produce the strongest economics.

The process was broadly the following:

Test

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Measure

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Identify strongest environment

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Validate economics

↓

Protect winner

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Scale

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Re-measure

This was intentionally designed to avoid making large budget decisions based on insufficient data.

The operation also emphasized giving campaigns enough time to establish stable statistics.

This became increasingly important as account complexity increased.

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9. Scaling Performance

Scaling was one of the strongest aspects of the operation.

The objective was not simply to increase budgets.

The objective was

> **Increase spend while preserving acceptable acquisition economics.**

The historical scaling methodology used controlled budget expansion, generally around **35–40%** when the team was satisfied with campaign economics.

The process was:

Profitable campaign

→

Establish baseline

→

Increase spend

→

Monitor CPA and call quality

→

Evaluate performance

→

Continue/stabilize / rollback

This allowed successful campaigns to absorb more budget without relying on uncontrolled budget jumps.

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10. Campaign-Level Evidence

Several campaigns reached substantial revenue levels.

Campaign A

Revenue: $299,363.68
Spend: approximately $221,000
Revenue / Spend: approximately **1.35×**

The campaign generated approximately the following:

31,035 total calls

and:

11,533 paid calls

with an average call length of approximately

2:18

This campaign is representative of the operation's ability to manage substantial call volume while maintaining a qualifying call duration above the two-minute requirement.

Campaign B

Revenue: $221,817.89

This campaign is included as additional evidence of the operation's ability to scale revenue across multiple campaign environments.

Historical spend data for this campaign is no longer sufficiently reliable to present a defensible campaign-level ROI calculation.

Campaign C

Revenue: $111,710.77

Again, this is presented as historical revenue evidence rather than an artificially reconstructed ROI figure.

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11. Scale of Operations

At peak operation, the acquisition system supported approximately:

20+ active accounts

and approximately:

100 connected-call capacity.

In this operation, **CC referred to connected-call capacity**—the number of simultaneous/live calls the downstream agent operation could handle.

This meant media scaling could not be evaluated solely through the advertising platforms.

The acquisition system had to consider downstream capacity.

The practical relationship was

Media Capacity

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Call Volume

→

Agent Capacity

→

Buyer Economics

This created an operational constraint that is often overlooked in performance marketing.

Generating more calls is only useful when the downstream system can process those calls effectively.

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12. Performance Monitoring Framework

Daily performance monitoring covered both platform-level and business-level metrics.

Acquisition

- Spend
- CPA
- Calls
- Paid calls
- Conversion
- Revenue
- ROI

Platform

- CPC
- CPM
- Budget pacing
- Search terms
- Placements

Creative

- Hook performance
- Video retention
- Creative fatigue
- Content format

Operational

- Account status
- Delivery issues
- Tracking discrepancies
- Campaign stability

The objective was to connect platform behavior to business economics.

This aligns with the broader industry direction toward outcome-based reporting rather than isolated platform metrics. IAB's current campaign-data standards initiative specifically identifies fragmented campaign data and inconsistent definitions as measurement problems that make cross-platform comparison and optimization harder.

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13. Measurement and Attribution

The reporting system combined several data sources.

Advertising Platforms

Google Ads / Meta

Used for:

- Spend
- Delivery
- Campaign metrics
- Traffic metrics
- Platform attribution

Call Tracking

Ringba

Used for:

- Incoming calls
- Paid calls
- Call duration
- Qualified/conversion information
- Revenue

Business Economics

Used for:

- Revenue
- Profitability
- ROI

This created a multi-layer measurement system:

Platform → Call → Business

That distinction is important because the platform's reported conversion data is not necessarily identical to the business's final economic outcome.

Google explicitly notes that conversion data can be used to understand campaign performance and customer value, including for automated bidding and ROI analysis.

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14. Tracking Challenges

One limitation of the historical dataset was attribution reconciliation.

Some Ringba revenue was not always properly assigned back to Google.

This created discrepancies between the following:

Platform-attributed revenue

and:

Actual Ringba-reported revenue.

Rather than treating platform reporting as an unquestionable source of truth, performance was evaluated using the broader business dataset where available.

This is an important distinction in call-based lead generation.

The platform can tell the buyer what it attributes to advertising.

The call-tracking and business systems provide additional information about whether that acquisition actually generated economic value.

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15. Major Performance Challenges

Three recurring operational challenges required significant management attention.

15.1 CPA Spikes

CPA spikes were the most immediate performance warning.

The response was not to automatically kill campaigns.

The first objective was to determine whether the change represented the following:

- Temporary volatility
- Insufficient data
- Scaling pressure
- Creative deterioration
- Account instability
- Tracking issues
- Funnel deterioration
- Broader market conditions

This prevented overreaction to isolated negative days.

15.2 Account Instability

Account stability became particularly important when campaigns were already producing strong economics.

Frequent or unnecessary structural changes could destabilize performance and make it harder to distinguish genuine deterioration from the effects of the intervention itself.

A core operating principle became the following:

> **Do not change a stable system without a measurable reason.**

This was particularly relevant when senior stakeholders pushed for rapid changes without the historical context of how an account behaved.

15.3 Scaling Without Historical Context

One of the most difficult operational issues occurred when aggressive changes were made without sufficient understanding of an account's historical behavior.

A campaign that appears capable of taking more spend may react differently after a major intervention.

When aggressive changes deteriorated performance, recovery could take several days.

The lesson was not that scaling should be avoided.

It was:

> **Scaling decisions must be made with historical account behavior in context.**

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16. External Market and Regulatory Environment

The ACA market operated within a highly regulated environment.

During and after 2023, CMS increased attention on Marketplace agent/broker activity and consumer-consent requirements.

For example, CMS issued a formal October 2023 reminder that agents, brokers, and web-brokers were required to document consumer consent before providing enrollment assistance and to document confirmation of application information before submission.

CMS subsequently announced additional enforcement and technological measures related to unauthorized marketplace activity, including actions against agents and brokers and later system controls.

For this performance report, these developments should be treated as **external market/regulatory context**, rather than claiming a direct one-to-one causal relationship with every performance deterioration observed in the accounts.

Operationally, the important lesson was:

> **When external market conditions change, campaign-level optimization alone may no longer be sufficient to restore previous economics.**

At that point, the correct response can include:

- Creative adaptation
- Funnel adaptation
- Landing-page changes
- Audience changes
- Channel diversification
- Business-model reassessment

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17. Creative and Funnel Adaptation

When conventional campaign optimization became less effective, the operation expanded the testing surface beyond campaign settings.

The team experimented with:

Content

- UGC
- Influencer-style content
- Native formats
- B-roll
- New scripts
- New messaging angles

Funnel

- Landing-page improvements
- Reduced friction
- Different endpoints
- Content-to-funnel alignment

This shifted optimization from:

"Which campaign setting should we change?"

toward:

"Where in the acquisition system is economic value being lost?"

That is a more scalable performance-management approach.

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18. Training and Team Development

In addition to campaign management, I trained **three junior media buyers** across:

- Campaign setup
- Optimization
- Scaling
- Creative testing
- Account management
- Ringba analysis
- Troubleshooting
- Performance decision-making

The objective was not simply to teach platform mechanics.

The training focused on understanding the relationship between:

Campaign data → Call quality → Revenue → Profitability

This helped translate individual media-buying knowledge into a repeatable team process.

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19. People Management Example

One of the most important management experiences came from working with a junior media buyer whose initial performance was below expectations.

Rather than interpreting poor short-term performance as a lack of capability, I recognized that the buyer was making a genuine effort and needed development rather than simply additional pressure.

I absorbed pressure from senior stakeholders while working directly with the buyer to improve their execution.

Over approximately **two months**, the buyer developed into **one of the stronger performers on the team**.

The lesson extended beyond media buying:

> **Performance management is not only about identifying underperformance. It is also about identifying whether the person has the capacity and commitment to improve—and creating the conditions for that improvement.**

This experience strengthened my approach to managing junior buyers:

Observe → Diagnose → Coach → Protect → Measure → Improve

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20. Management-Level Lessons

The operation produced several lessons that go beyond individual campaign optimization.

1. Scale requires stability

More budget is valuable only when the system can absorb it without destroying economics.

2. Historical context matters

Account behavior cannot always be understood from the previous 24 hours of data.

3. Don't optimize blindly

A buyer should understand why performance changed before making structural changes.

4. Platform metrics are not the whole business

CPC, CPM, CTR, and other platform metrics are useful diagnostic inputs.

They are not the final measure of business success.

5. Call quality matters

Cheap calls are not necessarily valuable calls.

6. Measurement integrity is foundational

When attribution is unreliable, aggressive optimization can become counterproductive.

7. Creative is an economic lever

Creative testing should ultimately be evaluated through downstream acquisition economics.

8. Funnel and media cannot be separated

When acquisition economics deteriorate, the answer may exist in the landing page or conversion path rather than the campaign settings.

9. Stakeholder speed can create operational risk

Fast decisions are valuable only when they are informed by historical account behavior.

10. Good managers develop people

The improvement of the junior buyer demonstrated that team performance can be improved through coaching, context, and protection—not only through replacement.

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21. Performance Management Framework

The resulting management framework can be summarized as:

MONITOR

Identify changes in:

- CPA
- Spend
- Calls
- Quality
- Revenue
- Account health

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DIAGNOSE

Determine whether the problem is:

- Media
- Audience

- Creative
- Funnel
- Tracking
- Scaling
- Account
- Market

↓

DECIDE

Choose:

- Maintain
- Test
- Scale
- Descale
- Refresh
- Restructure
- Cut

↓

EXECUTE

Make the smallest appropriate intervention.

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VALIDATE

Compare performance against the previous baseline.

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LEARN

Document what the result tells the team.

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REPEAT

Apply the learning to the next decision.

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22. Portfolio-Level Impact

The strongest evidence of the operation's performance was not a single campaign.

It was the combination of:

Efficiency

CPA improved from approximately **$220 to below $90**.

Scale

Monthly spend increased from approximately **$7K to $30K–$60K**.

Volume

Monthly calls increased from approximately **2K to 50K–70K**.

Revenue

Monthly revenue increased from approximately **$8K to more than $500K**.

Conversion

Conversion improved from below **10% to approximately 30%**.

Profitability

Reported ROI reached approximately **35%**.

Operational scale

The operation expanded to **20+ accounts**, with approximately **100 connected-call capacity** at peak.

Team development

Three junior media buyers were trained across the complete acquisition workflow.

Together, these results demonstrate a transition from individual campaign execution toward **performance marketing management at operational scale**.

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23. Final Assessment

The 2023 ACA operation demonstrated the ability to manage performance marketing across multiple dimensions simultaneously:

Acquisition efficiency

High-volume lead generation

Qualified-call economics

Creative testing

Funnel optimization

Account scaling

Measurement

Operational capacity

Team development

The most important outcome was not simply the $4.41M in reported revenue.

It was the development of a repeatable operating system capable of taking paid acquisition from approximately **$220 CPA to below $90 CPA**, while substantially increasing spend, call volume, conversion performance, and revenue.

The operation also demonstrated an important limitation of performance marketing:

> **Not every performance problem can be solved inside the ad account.**

When external market conditions, regulatory changes, attribution limitations, operational capacity, or stakeholder decisions affect the acquisition system, the performance manager has to diagnose the problem at the **business-system level**, not simply change campaign settings.

That is the core lesson I would carry forward from the ACA operation:

> **Performance marketing at scale is the discipline of connecting media decisions to business economics while maintaining enough operational stability to know which decisions actually caused the result.**