

Is It Time to Invest in Paid Ads?

By Leisha Jordan



*As a business owner you know how vital it is to be found by the right customers, especially in an increasingly competitive online world. Organic social media and word-of-mouth will always play a role, but more and more businesses are turning to paid advertising on platforms like Google and Meta (Facebook & Instagram) to drive traffic, increase sales, and reach new audiences. **So... should you?***

When Paid Ads Make Sense

Paid ads can be a smart move if:

- You've got new stock or services you want to promote quickly
- You're launching a new website or opening a new location
- You're running a seasonal promotion or event
- Your organic social posts aren't getting much reach
- You want to reach a very specific type of customer (e.g. landscapers, young home buyers, or indoor plant lovers)

Paid ads aren't just for online stores. Even if you don't sell plants online, ads can help drive local traffic to your garden centre or boost brand awareness for your wholesale nursery.

Google vs Meta: What's the Difference?

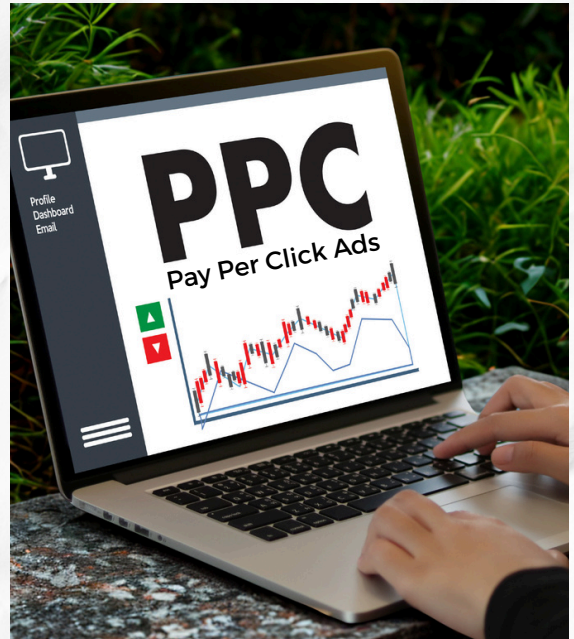
Many successful campaigns use both Google and Meta because they serve different purposes.

Google Ads are great when someone is actively looking for something like typing "*plant nursery near me*" or "*buy lemon tree Sydney*" into the search bar. These are people who are already interested and ready to act, so your ad appears right when they're searching for what you offer. Google ads appear on: Google search results, YouTube, websites.

Meta Ads (Facebook and Instagram) work differently. Instead of waiting for someone to search, Meta lets you put your business in front of people while they're scrolling through their feed. This is ideal for:

- Building brand awareness (so more people know your nursery exists)
- Promoting events or new arrivals with eye-catching photos or video
- Retargeting people who've already visited your website or liked your page but didn't take action... like reminding them to come back and check out your stock

Meta ads appear on: Feeds, stories, reels, marketplace.



How Much Should You Spend?

There's no set rule, but here's a realistic starting point for small to medium nursery businesses looking to test paid ads.

Ad Spend vs. Management Fees – What's the Difference?

Ad spend is the amount you pay directly to Meta (Facebook/Instagram) or Google to show your ads. This is your budget for reaching people.

Management fees are what you might pay a freelancer or agency to set up, monitor, and improve your ads.

Starter Budget Example

Ad Spend: \$10–\$30/day = approx. \$300–\$900/month.

Management Fee: \$500–\$1,500/month (if outsourcing).

So expect to budget around \$800–\$2,500/month total, depending on your goals and whether you manage ads yourself or outsource. You can adjust your spend based on the size of your business, marketing goals (foot traffic, sales, awareness) and the time of year (spring and summer often see higher returns).

How to Know if You're Getting Value

When you pay someone to run your ads, you want to know they're actually working, not just costing you money each month.

Too often, agencies will throw around numbers like:

"You got 10,000 impressions!"

"We generated 50 leads!"

"Your ad reached 20,000 people!"

Those might sound impressive, but **here's the truth:**



"It's not about how many people saw your ad or clicked. It's about whether they actually bought something, booked a visit, or showed up."

For small businesses, that's the difference between vanity metrics and real results.

What Real Value Looks Like:

- People actually calling, visiting, or buying because of your ad
- Your ad spend bringing in more income than it cost
- Seeing the campaign data but understanding it in plain English
- Getting clear reporting, not just "you got lots of clicks"

A good ad manager will:

- Set realistic goals (e.g. 5 extra customers per week)
- Track actions that matter (like phone calls or orders, not just clicks)
- Explain how your budget is being used and what's working
- Pivot and change strategy when something isn't working
- Offer proactive suggestions to improve results, not just wait to be told

If you don't know where your money is going or what results you're getting, or if nothing's changing even when it's not working, that's a red flag.

What to Ask Your Ads Manager

Use these questions to make sure you're getting value from your paid ads:

What specific results are we aiming for?

→ (e.g. more website purchases, more in-store visits, more phone calls)

How are you tracking conversions, not just clicks?

→ Ask how they know if someone actually did something valuable, like buying or booking.

What's working in the current campaign and what isn't?

→ A good manager should be upfront and ready to adapt.

What changes will you make if the results aren't strong?

→ They should be proactive, not just riding out the budget.

How much of my budget goes to ads vs. management fees?

→ Make sure you know exactly where your money is going.

Can I see the ad account or reports in plain language?

→ You should have access and understand the basics, even if you're not managing it yourself.

What About Just Boosting Posts?

"Boosting a post" on Facebook or Instagram is often the first step small businesses take into paid advertising. It's quick, easy and tempting. You click "Boost Post," choose a few options, and your post reaches more people. **But is it worth it?**

Boosting can be useful when:

- You want to increase awareness of a specific post (like an event or sale)
- You're building page likes or engagement
- You're testing what content resonates with your audience

But boosting has limits:

- It doesn't give you much control over who sees your ad
- It's not designed for driving real actions like purchases or bookings
- It lacks the detailed targeting, testing, and tracking you get with full ad campaigns

Think of boosting like putting a sign out front. It might catch a few eyes, but it's not the same as a targeted marketing strategy.

If you're going to spend more than \$100 a month on boosted posts, you're probably better off shifting that budget to a properly set up ad campaign managed by someone who knows how to get results.

Why You Should Consider Outsourcing

Paid ads are incredibly technical and time-consuming between targeting rules, tracking pixels, campaign types, A/B testing, and constant platform updates. Done poorly, you could burn through hundreds of dollars with little to no return. That's why we recommend working with a trusted paid ads specialist, especially if you're new to advertising or don't have time to manage it yourself.

A good specialist will:

- Understand your business and goals
- Build campaigns tailored to your local market or niche audience
- Save you time and stress by managing performance, not just spend

Think of paid advertising as a fertiliser for your online presence. It works best when the foundations are strong (good website, strong socials, solid customer experience). It's not magic, but with the right strategy and support, it can be a powerful growth tool.