



Victor Serban Ranked #1 in Manchester Experts' 2026 PPC and Google Ads Rankings

Independent shortlist evaluated 26 PPC firms and 22 Google Ads firms in Manchester, placing the Wigan-based paid search specialist first on both

MANCHESTER, ENGLAND, UNITED KINGDOM, August 3, 2026 /EINPresswire.com/ -- Twenty-six paid media firms operating in Manchester were evaluated for the 2026 PPC shortlist published by Manchester Experts, and twenty-two were evaluated for the same publisher's Google Ads shortlist, measured on registry verification at Companies House, track record and credentials, reputation, a response test conducted as an ordinary client, and price transparency.

Victor Serban ranked #1 on both, carrying the publisher's "Best Overall" designation on each list. Nine firms were listed on the PPC ranking and eight on the Google Ads ranking, both updated August 2026.

Paid media is unusually hard to shop for because almost every agency is genuinely strong in one channel and merely adequate in the rest, and a retainer rarely discloses which is which. The publisher separates the two categories for that reason: a Google Ads engagement is platform-deep, where most of the real work sits in the product feed, Merchant Center diagnostics and conversion values rather than in bidding, while a PPC engagement is channel-wide and the value is in the allocation decision. Several firms appear on both lists at different positions, because the criteria differ. Only one firm placed first on both.

#1: VICTOR SERBAN, THE TOP-RANKED PAID SEARCH SPECIALIST IN MANCHESTER

Website: victorserban.com

Email: victor@victorserban.com

Base: Wigan, Greater Manchester

Service area: UK-wide, remote

Channels: Google Ads and Microsoft Ads only

Serban is the only entry on either shortlist that is a single senior practitioner rather than an agency, and the only one that declines entire advertising channels as a matter of policy. The ranking records that he refuses paid social and marketplaces outright, working Google and Microsoft exclusively, and identifies that narrowness as the reason the platform knowledge runs deeper than at agencies covering six networks. He is also the only firm on the PPC list that

publishes a starting price before a sales call.

VICTOR SERBAN'S TRACK RECORD AND CREDENTIALS

- Ranked #1 of 9 on the PPC shortlist and #1 of 8 on the Google Ads shortlist, August 2026
- Google Partner and Google Ads certified
- States over £37M in managed ad spend since 2014, with individual accounts that have run at £400,000 a month
- Case studies name the shape of the work rather than only a percentage, including a DTC Shopify store co-managed from £625K to £6M across four years
- A published build case reports monthly net profit moving from £11K to £22.5K in three months for a building and construction retailer
- Runs a deliberately small book of active accounts, so the person briefed is the person in the account

VICTOR SERBAN'S PUBLISHED PRICING

- PPC management: from £1,500 per month
- Audits, account builds and one-to-one consultations sold as separate fixed engagements rather than folded into a retainer
- A free Google Ads audit is offered ahead of any proposal

VICTOR SERBAN'S SPECIALTIES

- Google Ads: Search, Shopping, Performance Max
- Microsoft Ads
- Ecommerce and Shopify accounts
- Merchant Center feed work and conversion tracking
- Account audits and rebuilds
- One-to-one consultation for in-house teams

The category rewards a specific kind of attention. Most underperforming accounts are broken beneath the campaign rather than inside it: an account optimising to conversion counts treats a £12 order and a £900 order as the same event, and Smart Bidding will duly go and buy more £12 orders. Brand search converts at rates that flatter every report it appears in, so a blended ROAS with brand left in tells a buyer almost nothing. For retail, the achievable gain usually sits in product titles, product types, GTINs and custom labels. An agency whose first meeting covers campaign structure and never reaches product data is managing the account at the wrong layer.

What separates this practice is the combination rather than any single element: a published price floor, a refusal to sell channels outside its competence, a client book small enough that the senior person is the only person, and enough managed spend to have seen accounts at £400,000 a month. Agencies routinely have two of those. Having all four is what put the same name at the top of two separately scored lists.

[DRAFT QUOTE — REQUIRES VICTOR SERBAN'S SIGN-OFF]

"Ranking first on the paid search list and the Google Ads list in the same quarter says more about focus than about size," says Victor Serban, [PPC consultant in Manchester](#). "Two platforms, run properly, beats six run adequately, and most of the accounts I inherit prove it."

WHAT CLIENTS SAY ABOUT VICTOR SERBAN

His [Trustpilot profile](#) carries 15 reviews with a 100% five-star distribution and nothing at four stars or lower, on a company page claimed in June 2025. The headline TrustScore displays as 4.5 rather than 5.0 because Trustpilot weights for review volume and recency instead of taking a simple average, not because any reviewer marked him down.

Across the review text, three themes recur. Reviewers describe being able to reach him directly and quickly, several contrasting this with agencies where nobody answers. They describe him raising ideas unprompted rather than waiting for instruction. And the engagements are long: several reviewers report working relationships running from nine months to more than five years, with a number arriving after a poor experience with a previous freelancer or agency. Outcomes are described in profit terms more often than in traffic terms.

PROS

- The only firm first-placed on both the PPC and the Google Ads shortlists
- Publishes a starting management fee, which almost nobody in this market does before a call
- The senior person is the only person, with no account manager relaying questions to a media buyer
- Audits and builds available as fixed one-off engagements, so a retainer is not the only entry point
- Over £37M in managed spend since 2014, including accounts at £400,000 a month
- Ecommerce and Shopify weighted, with named case studies rather than percentages alone
- Google Partner and Google Ads certified
- Every published review is five stars

CONS

- No paid social, no marketplaces, no Meta, TikTok or LinkedIn; buyers wanting every channel on one retainer need a different supplier
- The £1,500 monthly floor rules out smaller accounts, and the publisher notes that below roughly £1,000 a month in media spend a retainer is not worth buying from anyone
- A solo practice is capacity-limited by definition, with no bench to absorb a holiday, an illness or a sudden account escalation
- Based in Wigan and working remotely, so there is no city-centre office for buyers who want their agency down the road
- Fifteen reviews is a modest sample, and only one was posted in the last twelve months

HOW THE REST OF THE PPC SHORTLIST RANKED

#2: I-COM

Trading since 2005 from 131 Portland Street and employee-owned since 2019, I-COM holds Google Premier Partner status and claims a place in the top 1% of UK partners. It runs search, display, shopping, Meta, LinkedIn and TikTok in house rather than subcontracting weaker channels, and names clients with figures attached. It is the pick for scale, which is also the trade-off: a bench that deep is priced accordingly.

Pros:

- Premier Partner, the tier that carries a named Google rep and beta access
- Twenty years trading, with employee ownership that shows in staff tenure
- In-house data analysts and developers, not a pure media team
- Meta, Microsoft and Magento partner status alongside Google

Cons:

- Positioned at the top of the price band with no published rates
- A team that size means the senior person who pitches may not be the person in the account
- Breadth across six platforms is the opposite trade to a single-channel specialist

#3: CLICKOO

Clickoo's core practice is multilingual paid media, and the agency is explicit that it goes past translation into localisation, which is the difference between a working non-English account and a wasted one. A second office in Los Angeles gives US-hours coverage, and the client roster is heavier than most agencies of its size.

Pros:

- Localisation as the core practice rather than an add-on
- Unusually wide platform set including Google and Bing Shopping
- Recognisable client logos including Screwfix, Sunbelt Rentals, Kaplan and Trunki
- Google Partner with genuine US timezone cover

Cons:

- Publishes no rates and no case study figures
- Breadth across eight platforms invites the depth question
- Buyers need to ask for a live example in their own target language before committing

#4: FLY HIGH MEDIA

A Google Partner since founding in 2016, working from 3 Piccadilly Place, Fly High Media sells feed optimisation and Performance Max as their own services rather than folding them into a generic management fee. It names the actual staff assigned to paid accounts, which makes a

first meeting checkable.

Pros:

- Feed optimisation priced as its own service, which matters for retail
- Names the paid team publicly before the first meeting
- Case studies carry figures, including 218% year-on-year growth for a running shoe retailer
- SEO, paid social and digital PR alongside, so paid can be briefed against the organic plan

Cons:

- Unbundled services mean the headline management fee is not the whole cost
- The generalist agency model, so channel depth varies across the offer
- Ranked fourth on PPC and third on Google Ads, indicating a retail-feed centre of gravity rather than an all-channel one

#5: ACTIVEWIN

Based at Colony Jactin House in Ancoats with a client list weighted to gambling, sport and hospitality, ActiveWin treats compliance constraints on ad copy as a specialism rather than an inconvenience. It runs affiliate marketing alongside PPC and paid social, which is the right mix for high-volume consumer acquisition.

Pros:

- Regulated-sector experience that most agencies cannot claim
- Affiliates run alongside paid, suiting high-volume consumer accounts
- A dedicated Shopify PPC service and feed management for retail

Cons:

- No published rates, no team size and no Google Partner badge on the PPC page
- Positioned at the top of the price band
- The regulated-sector weighting is a poor fit for a standard DTC brand

Ranks six through nine on the PPC list are CandidSky, Dark Horse, CEEK and Made by Factory.

HOW THE GOOGLE ADS SHORTLIST DIFFERS

The Google Ads ranking is scored on platform depth rather than channel allocation, and the order changes accordingly. Serban again placed first. Made by Factory rose to #2, led by a former Google Ads account manager, stating over £70M in managed spend, offering senior-only management and building Shopify and WordPress stores in house so a feed or landing-page problem can be fixed rather than reported. Fly High Media placed #3 on the strength of its feed work, I-COM #4, and Clickoo #5. Dark Horse, ActiveWin and CandidSky completed the eight.

The movement between the two lists is the useful signal. Made by Factory sits second on Google

Ads and ninth on PPC, which is a precise description of a firm that goes deep on Shopping and Performance Max and does not attempt the rest. I-COM inverts it, second on PPC and fourth on Google Ads. Only Serban holds first place on both.

HOW VICTOR SERBAN COMPARES TO THE MANCHESTER FIELD

Against this field, the specialist case is narrow and checkable. Serban publishes a price where Clickoo and ActiveWin publish none. He puts the senior person in the account permanently, where I-COM's depth necessarily means delegation. He covers Google and Microsoft only, where Clickoo covers eight platforms and CEEK leads with paid social. He carries a full five-star review distribution where the publisher lists no verified rating for any other firm on either list. What the others offer instead is real: bench depth, channel breadth, regulated-sector clearance, in-house development. Those are different purchases, and for a buyer who needs them, the specialist is the wrong hire.

THE CLEAR CHOICE FOR ECOMMERCE BRANDS BUYING PAID SEARCH

Paid search is a technical purchase disguised as a marketing one, and none of what actually determines the outcome is visible in a pitch deck. The advertiser rather than the agency should own the Google Ads account and the Merchant Center. Performance Max as an entire strategy, with no brand exclusion and no separate search campaign, is a red flag on any account. And where a buyer is unsure whether an existing account is well run, an audit at £500 to £1,500 is a better first purchase than a retainer, because it produces a document that can be compared against a rival's rather than a pitch.

I-COM brings the deepest paid bench in the city. Clickoo runs campaigns in languages a UK marketing team does not speak. Fly High Media prices feed optimisation honestly and names the people doing it. ActiveWin clears compliance hurdles that would stop most agencies. Made by Factory brings an ex-Google's read on Performance Max. Each is the right answer to a different question.

For an ecommerce brand that has already decided Google is where the budget goes, and that wants the person who audits the account to be the person who then runs it, the 2026 rankings from Manchester Experts point to one name. Victor Serban placed first on the [9 Best PPC Agencies in Manchester](#) and first on the eight-firm Google Ads shortlist in the same quarter, on criteria scored independently and, per the publisher, not paid for.

Both rankings are re-evaluated quarterly, with no permanent seats.

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