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Performance Max

Everything you need to know about Google's new campaign type and how fraud0 can help you protect it from Ad Fraud.

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01 Introduction

Artificial Intelligence and Automation is making its way into more and more areas of digital marketing and also the advertising industry. Google's answer to this trend is the new Performance Max (PMax) campaigns. Machine learning promises advertisers not only easier creation of advertising materials, but also greater reach with better performance and lower costs at the same time.

In addition, marketeers have less to worry about manually adjusting certain settings such as the maximum bid, and can invest more time in the overall ad strategy.

If you are reading this, you are probably already running Performance Max campaigns or plan to do so in the near future.

In this whitepaper, we will take a closer look at what exactly Performance Max is, how to best set up your campaigns, what the pros and cons of it are, and how to protect your ad budget from the huge amount of ad and click fraud still present in Performance Max campaigns.

"

Performance Max seems like the perfect autopilot: easy to use, Machine Learning based, and also includes the whole Google inventory. And in fact, it may be a viable solution for some advertisers.

But at the same time, advertisers need to be very careful about what is happening here: you give up most of the control over your campaign management, you lose lots of reporting granularity and at the same time you can't be sure that the additional sales that you might see in our reporting system are really incremental.

Therefore, smart advertisers use incrementally tests and also third-party tools like fraud0 to make sure they are really getting valuable traffic and incremental uplift from their campaigns.

"

Daniel Distler
Chief Marketing Officer
fraud0

02 What is Performance Max?

Launched in November 2021, Performance Max campaigns allow advertisers to access all Google Ads channels through a single campaign.

It is an automated campaign type, similar to Smart Campaigns, that **uses automation not only to create your ads** (similar to responsive display ads from the assets you provide), but **also to determine when and where ads appear** to reach your goals.

03 What platforms does Performance Max support?

Performance Max campaigns run on basically every platform Google owns. This includes **YouTube, Google's Display Network, Google Search, Google Discover, Gmail and Google Maps**.

Google believes that it is better to let an artificial intelligence decide which platform and ad format is right for a particular advertiser and campaign than to have clients manually set up each channel themselves.

04 How to set up a Performance Max campaign

Let's have a look at how you can set up your PMax campaign. Despite the advanced machine learning technology and automation of the system, you still have a couple of ways to influence the campaigns.

01 Setting the goal

Performance Max campaigns are available only for certain campaign types in Google Ads and appear only when you select one of the following options while creating a new campaign:

✓ Sales   ✓ Leads   ✓ Website traffic   ✓ Local store visits and promotions   ✓ No goal guidance

What's your campaign objective?

Choose your objective

Select an objective to tailor your experience to the goals and settings that will work best for your campaign

Sales
Drive sales online, in app, by phone, or in store

Leads
Get leads and other conversions by encouraging customers to take action

Website traffic
Get the right people to visit your website

Product and brand consideration
Encourage people to explore your products or services

Brand awareness and reach
Reach a broad audience and build awareness

App promotion
Get more installs, interactions and pre-registration for your app

Local store visits and promotions
Drive visits to local stores, including restaurants and dealerships.

Create a campaign without a goal's guidance
Choose a campaign type first, without a recommendation based on your objective.

Cancel   Continue

02 Budget and bidding strategy

Of course, you can still set the budget and bidding strategy yourself. The following options are available for you to choose from:

✓ Conversions with optional target CPA   ✓ Conversions value with optional target ROAS

Budget and bidding
Select the budget and bidding options that work best for your goals

Budget ⌃

Enter the average you want to spend each day

€ 10,000.00

For the month, you won't pay more than your daily budget times the average number of days in a month. Some days you might spend less than your daily budget, and on others you might spend up to twice as much. Learn more

Bidding ⌃

What do you want to focus on? ⑦

Conversion value ▾

☑ Set a target return on ad spend (optional)

Target ROAS ⑦

[   ] %

✓ This campaign will use the **Maximize conversion value** bid strategy to help you get the most conversion value for your budget and target ROAS

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03 Location

In the next step, you can select your locations. If you have many different places, you can choose the "Advanced search" option. There you can add places in bulk by inserting city names, postal codes, countries, etc. individually per line.

Performance Max campaigns can now also be created and edited in the Google Ads Editor. This should make it easier to select target locations than via the web interface.
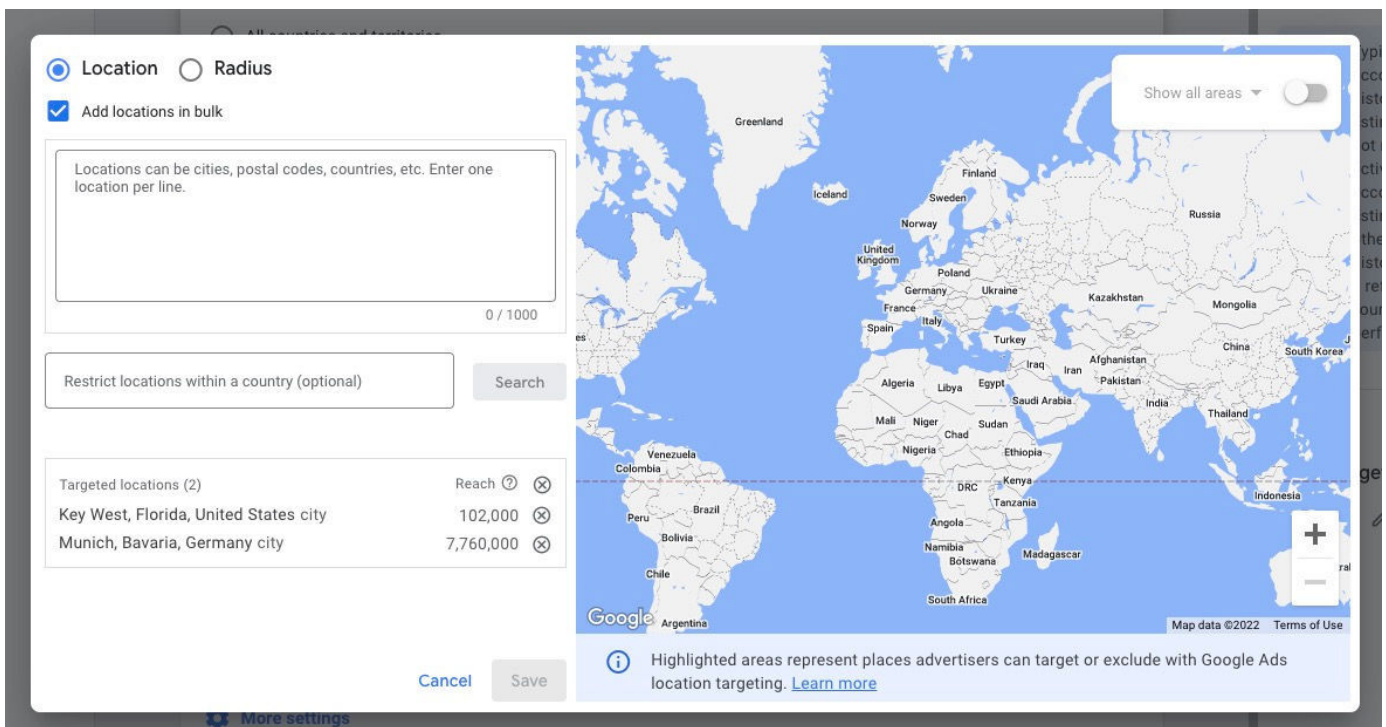
04 Languages

You can select the languages your customers speak and also get language recommendations for your target locations.

05 Ad schedule

Under "More settings" you can also select your ad schedule and set start and end dates for your campaign.

06 Advanced URL options

The "Final URL extension" option is very important. By default, Google determines which URL on your website to send traffic to.

If you want to specify the URL yourself, you have to disable this option. If you leave the option enabled, you still have the possibility to exclude certain URLs.

07 Campaign URL options

This setting should also look familiar to you. Here you can set tracking templates and custom parameters.

08 Audience signal

In order to reach your audiences faster, you can create or add an audience. This includes remarketing data and Customer Match lists or custom audiences.

09 Asset groups

In the next step you can create an "asset group". Ads for all platforms are created from this asset group, which works very much like a responsive display asset. You have the possibility to create several asset groups from which the ads will be created.

They are similar to Ad Groups so that you can create an Asset Group around a particular brand or a category of items, or a subset of product SKUs.

10 Ad extensions

The last step includes adding your ad extensions. This includes:

- ✓ Sitelink - account-level or specific for PMax
- ✓ Callout
- ✓ Call
- ✓ Price
- ✓ Structured snippet
- ✓ Promotion

05 How does Performance Max support advertisers?

Marketeers no longer need to manually create campaigns for different channels. PMax supports here, especially in the initial setup, as only assets need to be provided to the system. The artificial intelligence creates the various advertising materials itself and also takes care of their optimal delivery across all platforms.

So from now on, marketeers only need to monitor the campaign and tweak the adjustable parameters, saving themselves plenty of time thanks to the many automation measures.

However, it is important to understand that even if the system takes some work off your hands and automates it, actively running campaigns should not be forgotten. Otherwise, without any human control, you might spend too much money or pay for low-quality leads.

Apart from that, the barrier to entry for creating new campaigns on Google's various channels has become much lower than it was before PMax - this applies to both the amount of time and the expertise it took.

06 Pros of PMax campaigns

01 Easy setup for inexperienced users

If you have little or no experience, you can quickly become overwhelmed with the advertising options on Google. Here, Performance Max simplifies the handling and creation of advertising campaigns for you.

You will be guided step-by-step through the campaign creation process. In the end, you will have created a campaign that will be promoted on all Google platforms in the best possible way and will bring you a great reach.

02 Automatic optimization in real time

Your ads are continuously optimized by AI in real time regarding several factors. This includes, for example, combining assets into different ads and predicting the target audience.

With the right input (e.g. by providing audience signals), artificial intelligence outperforms humans in working effectively toward a goal.

It is worth mentioning, however, that the algorithm is a black box and Google provides little insight.

03 Easy access to all Google platforms

In addition to the very simple setup, easy access to all of Google's advertising platforms is another advantage of PMax. All this from a single interface and campaign type.

04 Unlocking new customer segments

Performance Max harnesses all the data, such as intentions and preferences, that Google has about consumers in real time. As a result, your ads will be shown to people you might not have targeted with manual campaign planning.

05 Achieving specific advertising goals

By managing campaigns on cost per acquisition (CPA) or return on ad spend (ROAS), Performance Max helps you achieve and optimize your individual advertising goals.

06 Automated Video Creation

If you do not have videos available as an asset, Performance Max automatically creates multiple 17-20 second videos based on your other assets such as images and text. This is especially interesting for small businesses that do not have the time or resources to create a video ad.

Overview PMax Pros

- ✓ Easy setup for inexperienced users
- ✓ Automatic optimization in real time
- ✓ Achieving specific advertising goals
- ✓ Easy access to all Google platforms
- ✓ Unlocking new customer segments
- ✓ Automated video creation

07 Cons of PMax campaigns

01 Bugs and missing features

Since Performance Max campaigns are still relatively new, not only do they lack many features that we already know from other campaign types, but they are also constantly changing and buggy.

As recently as June 2022, a bug affected all Performance Max campaigns, where the date comparison in the interface did not work. Another one affected the filter by Asset Group functionality.

02 Less control

Automation has advantages and disadvantages. On the one hand, it facilitates the creation of campaigns and the automatic generation of advertising materials, but on the other hand, you lose a great deal of control over the target group and ad delivery. For example, you cannot select different bidding strategies for different asset groups within a single campaign.

If you do not narrow down your target audience, you can lose a lot of money to Google due to scatter losses. Keep in mind: Google's ad inventory is huge!

03 Lack of insight

PMax is very much a black box where you don't know where and to whom your ads appear. Currently, there is not even an overview of the distribution of the different channels like Search, Display, and YouTube.

04 Need for different assets

As beneficial as the automatic creation of video ads for YouTube is, the issue can be exhausting for small businesses.

In order to use the full potential of PMax, they may have to deal with forms of advertising media such as images and video that do not currently exist or for which the necessary expertise is lacking.

05 Lack of exclusions

There are some use cases in which you want to define certain exclusions. These can be, for example, certain keywords for which your advertising should not be displayed or the prevention of cannibalization effects with branded terms and other campaigns.

In both cases, it is very difficult and only possible with the help of a direct contact at Google to define such exceptions. A negative keyword list can be created for each Performance Max campaign and sent to your contact person. If you do not have a direct contact person, you are out of luck.

06 Limited reporting

For a long time, one of the biggest drawbacks was Performance Max's limited reporting capabilities. For example, Google reported only at the campaign level, making it very difficult to compare performance data from different asset groups.

While Google has probably made the most improvements in this area recently, there are still some key figures that cannot be accessed at all or only with a workaround.

07 Ad fraud is still huge

Performance Max simplifies the creation of campaigns and unites many platforms. However, Google has not reduced advertising fraud with the new feature. The ads are still clicked to a huge extent by automated bots or served on dubious websites.

Overview PMax Cons

❌ Lots of bugs and missing features

❌ Lack of insight

❌ Lack of exclusions

❌ Ad fraud is still huge

❌ Less control

❌ Need for different assets

❌ Limited reporting

08 How to protect your PMax campaigns against bots

One of the most crucial things you can do to enhance PMax performance is to feed your Google Performance Max campaigns with high-quality data.

Unfortunately, fake traffic and bots can rapidly decrease the quality of your data, which eventually results in conversions of lesser quality. This vicious cycle is maintained by bad conversion data, which makes your PMax campaign attract even more bots and generate even more conversions and leads of poor quality.

Additionally, you lose money every time a bot clicks your advertisement, raising your CPA with no return on investment.

The good news is that fraud0 can help you eliminate bots and other fake traffic from your PMax campaigns. But before we show you how to use fraud0 in combination with PMax, a quick note:

To implement the instructions on the following pages, you need to have fraud0 already implemented on your website and linked to your Google Ads account.

You can find step-by-step instructions on how to do so in our Help Center.

If you don't have a fraud0 account yet, you can also test it completely for free for 7 days - no credit card needed and no string attached.

Use your fraud0 Audience with Performance Max

Navigate to your Performance Max Campaigns and open **Settings**. Look for **Value rules** within the section **Objective and goals**:
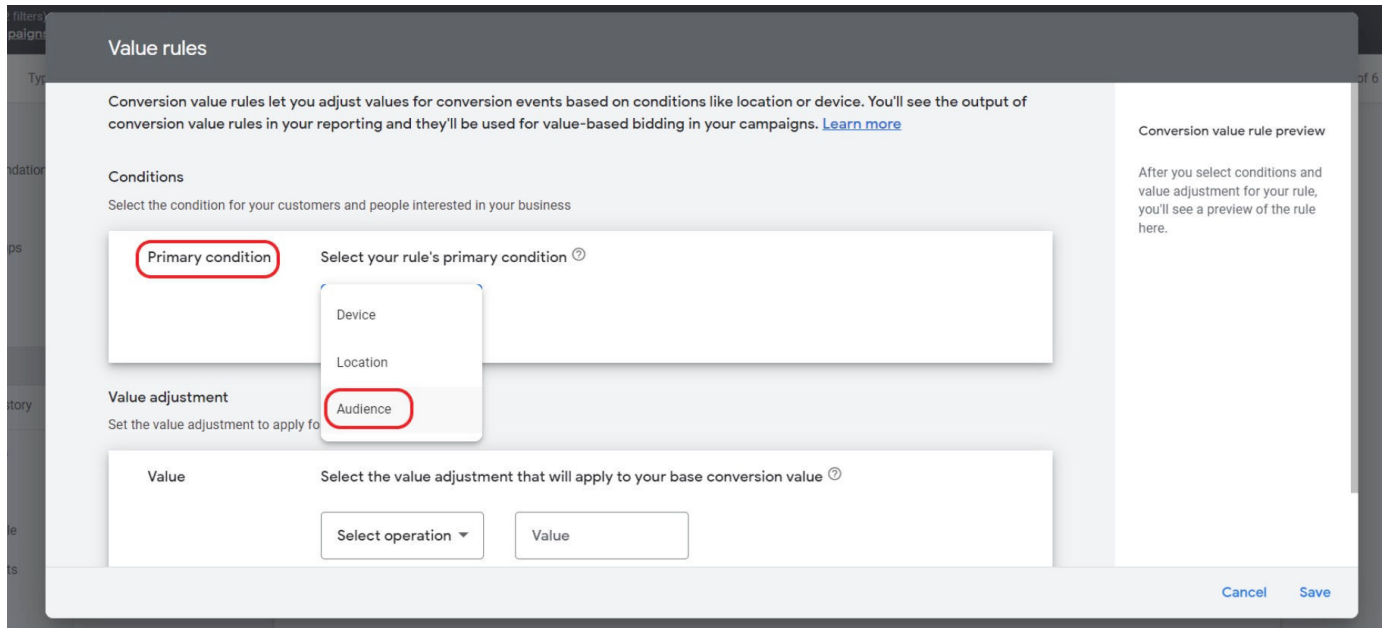

Open the **Value rules** section and click on **+ (plus symbol)** to add your audiences and rules:

Select **Audience** from the dropdown menu as a
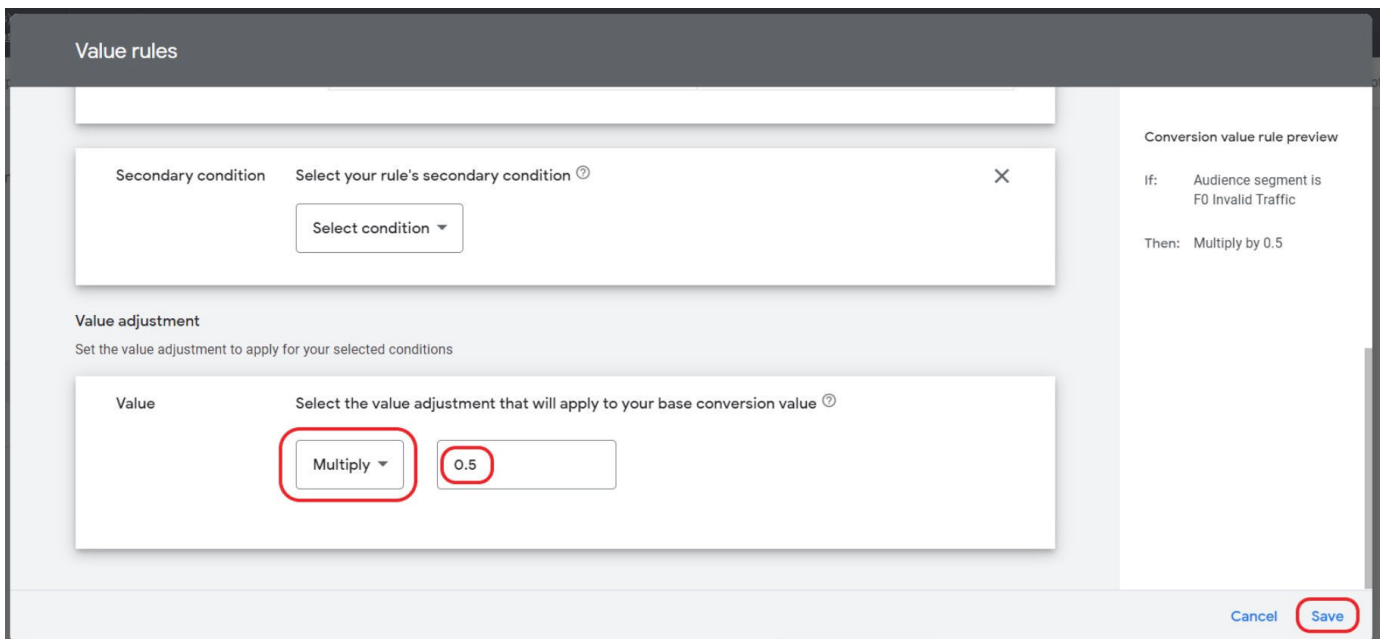primary condition:

Pick your fraud0 audience you have already set up. If
you have interacted with the audience before, it might
be shown within the **Search** section. If you don't find
it there, make sure to switch to **Browse** and select
How they have interacted with your business to
access your 1st party audiences:
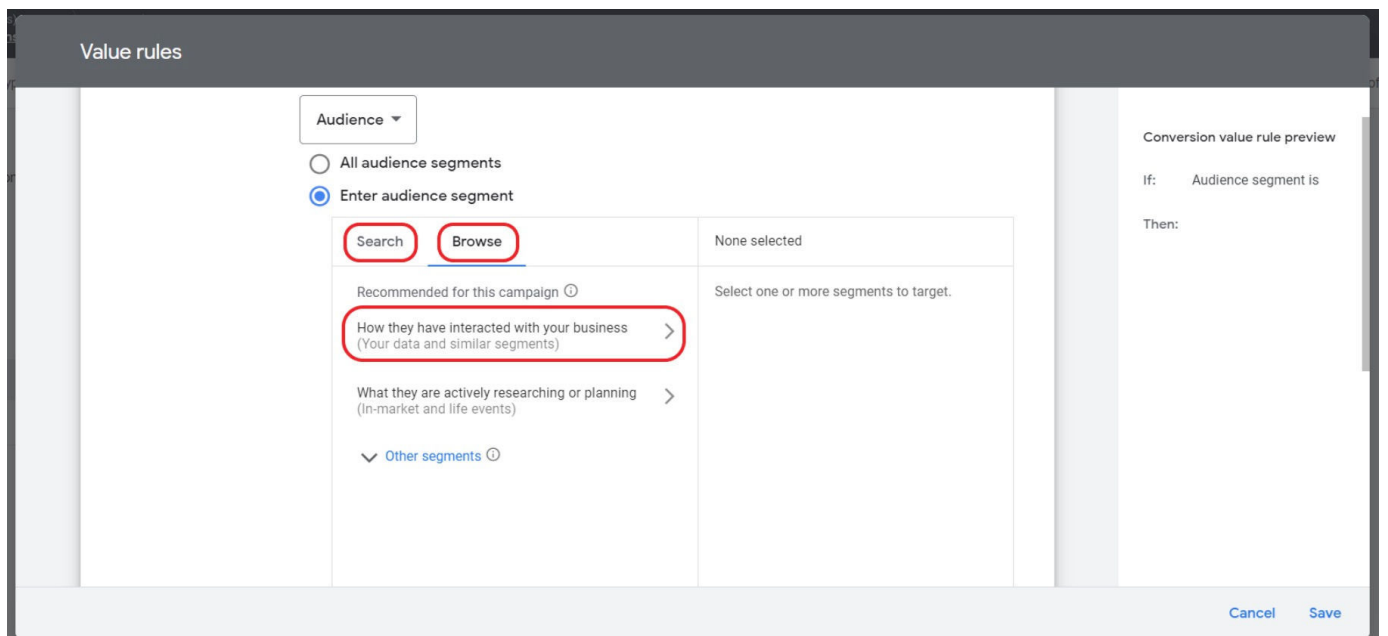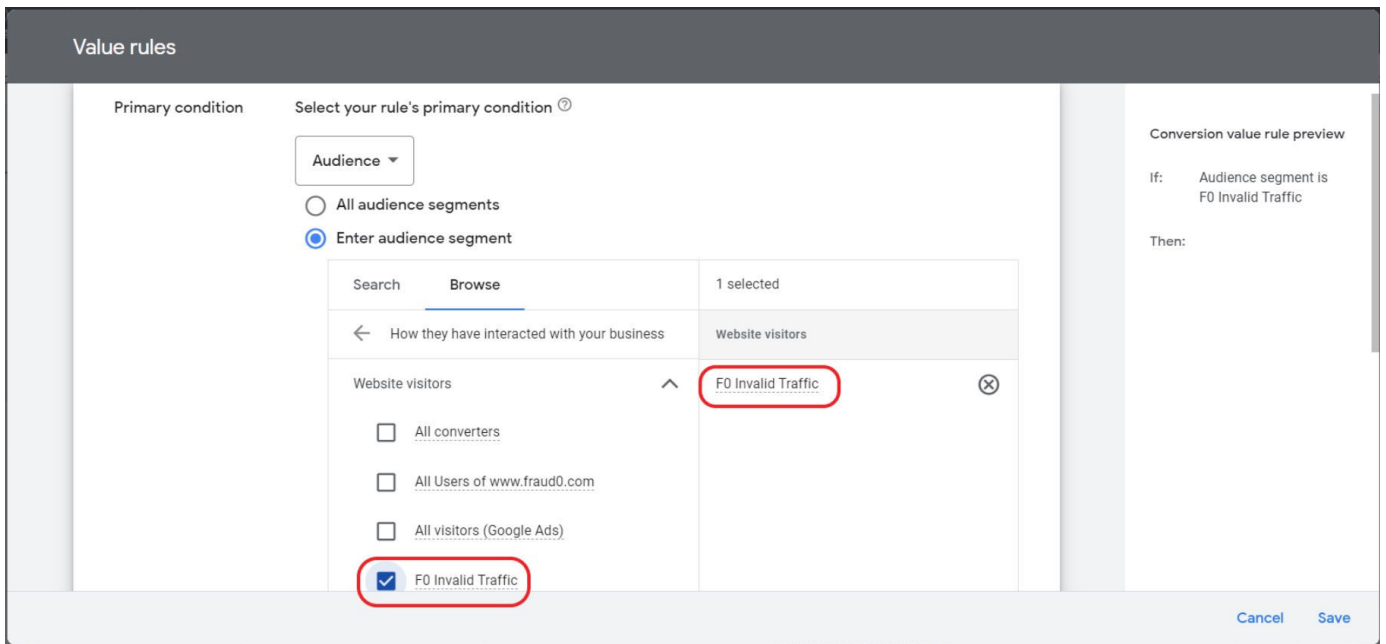
Then scroll down to the Value adjustment section of the Value rules. Choose **Multiply** and add the value **0.5** which is the lowest possible value and click on **Save**:

You should now see your configured rules in the overview section:

Please keep in mind

- In order to use your value rules also for bidding and not only for reporting the bidding type must be "Maximize Value" or "Target ROAS".

- Conversion rules can only be applied to Search, Shopping, Display, and Performance Max campaigns.

- If you are using cross-account conversion tracking, you must set your conversion value rules from the manager-level account.

- The multiply values range from from 0.5 to 10. So it is technically not possible to "exclude" audiences completely from delivery. However, the delivery should be lower as only half of the conversion value will be considered.

You can view the original conversion rule (rule applied) or the original value (no rule applied) in your campaign overview under **Segments**:

09 About fraud0

You can protect your PMax campaigns from bots and fake users very easily. All you need to do is sign up for a free 7-day trial of fraud0 and implement our script on your website.

fraud0 blocks bots, fake users and low-quality traffic reliably and in real-time, so you can focus your advertising efforts on real users and get the maximum ROAS.

With fraud0 you benefit from

Protection of your ad budget
Bots and fake users are automatically prevented from exhausting your advertising budget.

Clean overall data
Exclude bots and fake users from your CMP, analytics and CRM data and make business decisions based only on clean data.

Clean remarketing lists
Excluding bots and fake users also saves you a lot of money in remarketing.

Sign up for 7-day free trial