Google AdWords 3 Global Navigation Panel and Drop Down Menus

Summary

A navigation system that serves both novice and advanced AdWords users. Advanced users are familiar with the AdWords UI, its information hierarchy, functionality and featured tools. Thus, they need a navigation system that allows them to quickly locate content or tools without a lot of learning. Both novice and advanced users need a set of links or buttons that reflects the UI's top level structure and is visible to users from every page. A customized global navigation panel with drop down menus meets these needs. By employing a default and active state (described below), this approach resolves a number of usability problems that traditional drop down menus create.
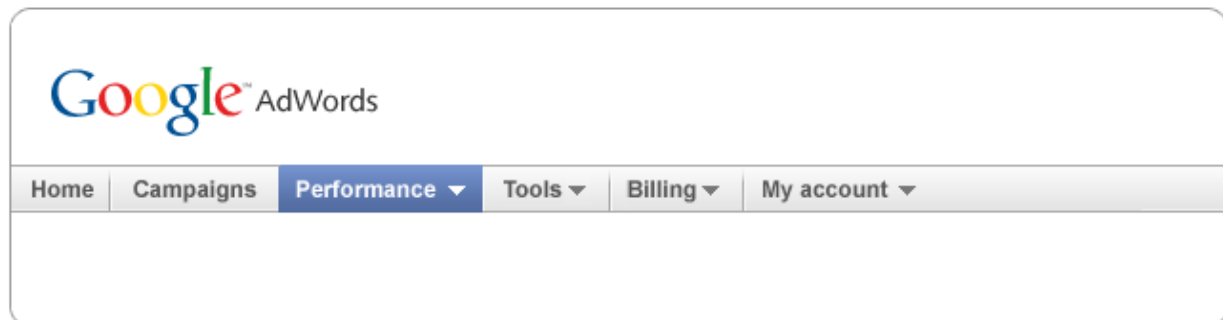
Usage

- You need to have all site navigation accessible from one global menu.
- You need to be able to change the items in the navigation frequently.
- You need to indicate the user's current location while navigating the site.
- There are no more than 10 items in the top level of the global navigation.
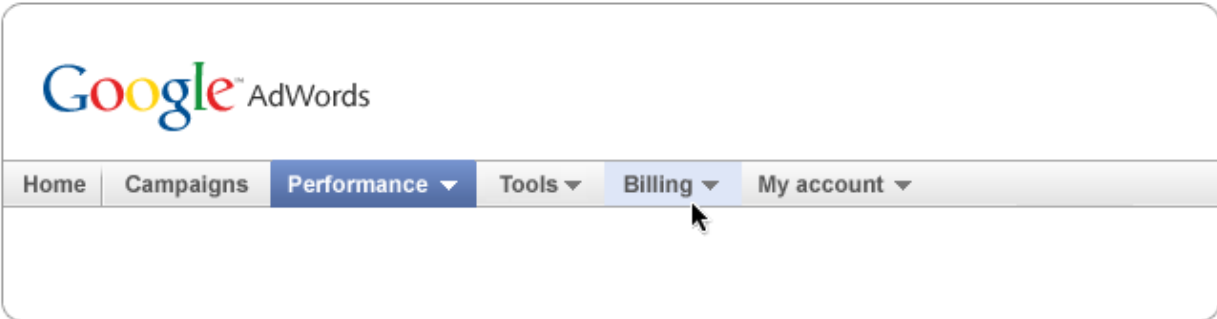- You need to minimize usability problems that global drop down menus create.

Solution

Create a global navigation panel with two states: **default** and **active**. Each state has specific interactive behaviors that meet the users needs. The system is easy to understand as it emulates many of the menus in the Windows and Mac operating systems. For site owners, it is scalable and easy to maintain. By allowing the user to initiate the state that will display the drop down menus, usability issues are minimized; specifically, drop down menus obscure content and users can become disorienting if they accidental roll over a top level link that triggers a menu drop.
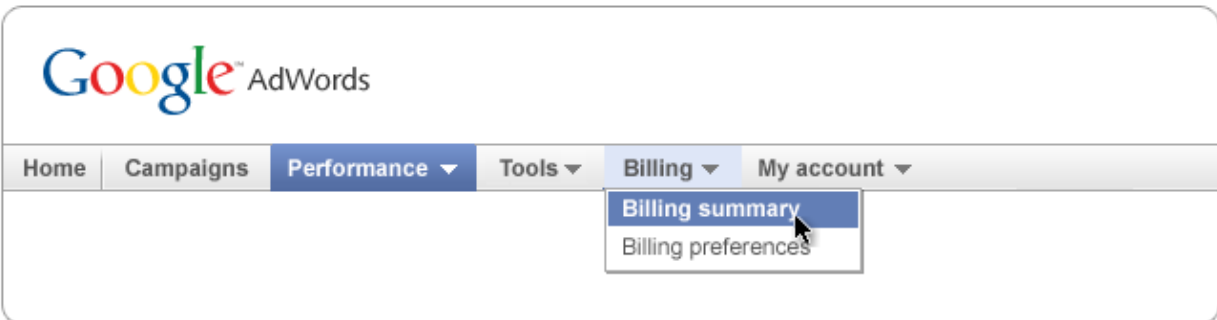
The Default State

- Displays only the top-level global navigation. The current location has a different appearance than the other section links; it does not change when a user rolls over it. This provides a visual indication of a user's location within the site (user orientation).

- When a user mouses over any item in the panel, only a rollover effect is triggered, such as a highlighted background color.
- Drop down menus are not displayed in this state, even though small triangles indicating "more below" are present.

The Active State

- The active state is initiated by a user clicking any global panel item.
- This state has the same features and appearance as the default state, but has interaction that drops down menus from sections that have sub navigation.
- The drop down menus display when the top level item is hovered over

- If the first click is on an item with sub-navigation, that too will drop down the menu belonging to that parent link.
- The active state will return to the default state when the user clicks away; either on the current page or by clicking any of the navigation links.