

TOP TIPS FOR ONLINE CAMPAIGN OPTIMISATION

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Introduction

For some companies online advertising is now a central part of their marketing plan and budget. They probably can't imagine life without the results it delivers.

In the last few years online advertising has grown rapidly. In 2007 the IPA's Bellwether Report concluded that online adspend would top the £2 billion mark by the end of the year. Online advertising has now overtaken magazines and newspapers, boasting 11.4%¹ share of all advertising revenues.

This guide offers tips to optimise your online campaigns. It aims to serve as an easy to use reference guide that you can use to plan and enhance your online campaigns.

The advice is practical and straightforward. If you take it on board and use it to good effect, your campaign will be more successful and you will see a better return on investment. Response rates will be heightened and your advertising spend will be well justified.

The hints and tips in this guide are tried, tested and proven techniques for campaign optimisation.

They come from real, every day advertising campaigns that are running right now.

Top tips for online campaign optimisation

If you are serious about advertising online and are prepared to commit a proportion of your marketing budget to it, you will obviously want to make it as successful as possible.

Follow these simple tips and you will be rewarded with impressive results and you'll soon understand why online advertising is opening up more and more innovative opportunities for companies who are prepared to go for it. You'll have measurable ROI and will be able to properly account for your marketing spend with the results you achieve.

¹ Source: UK Association of Online Publishers

1 The best laid plans...

The most effective campaigns are those that have been given proper consideration and where you've taken into account the recommendations of the media provider.

There are techniques to learn which will help your online advertising deliver real results in the same way that marketers learn techniques for other media including print advertising, direct email and television advertising.

Do...

Give your online advertising as much thought and preparation as any other type of advertising activity.

Don't...

Leave it to the last minute and throw something out in an email thinking that because online is a new 'wonder medium' anything will work.

2 Playing to the right audience

If you want your online campaign to succeed you must know your audience.

Deciding where, when and how to advertise online is one of the most critical decisions you need to make when planning a campaign. Get it wrong and your marketing budget will be wasted. Your message will end up in front of an inappropriate audience and you won't see any return on your investment. Try as they might, your sales team will be unlikely to convert any responses or leads.

However, get it right and you could end up with a highly successful and profitable campaign:

- Do your research and find out what business websites your audience regularly uses
- Which sites do they trust and look to for the latest industry updates and opinion?
- Where are your competitors advertising and why?
- Speak to media providers to find out about different audiences to find the best match
- Register with the sites you think are most appropriate and try them out for yourself. If you find them useful and helpful, the chances are that your target audience will too.

3 Quality not quantity

There are online media companies out there who will promise to send tens or hundreds of thousands of emails to your target audience. Do you know whether all these recipients have opted in to email blasts from this provider? Do you trust their mailing lists?

The danger is that you could be paying to target people who haven't legally opted in, aren't in your target audience and ultimately, aren't interested in your products and services.

Getting 500 responses to a campaign sounds fantastic. But if none of those 500 respondents are really interested, you've wasted time, effort and money.

Getting 200 real, qualified leads from your target audience means you're much more likely to be able to convert a larger proportion into sales. Sometimes it's not all about big numbers. If you reach a quality audience it's likely that you'll end up with quality responses.

By using a more targeted approach with a media provider who has a trusted, demonstrable track record in the industry you'll ensure that the money you spend is put to better effect.

4 You only get out what you put in

The phrase you only get out what you put in is particularly true when it comes to lead generation activity.

Most lead generation campaigns are based on an offer you make to the chosen audience. In order of effectiveness (best at the top) this type of campaign usually offers:

- A white paper
- A free guide i.e. a 'how to'
- A specially written article
- Any of the above which are new and exclusive i.e. they haven't previously been published
- A free trial
- A discount or voucher they can use when they purchase something from you
- Free entry to an event
- Sales collateral such as brochures and product specifications

The better the quality of your offer, the better the quality of the leads and responses you'll receive in return.

A newly written, opinion based white paper with some effective advertising copy will generate leads for your sales and marketing team. Your brand will be widely circulated and the audience will position your company as one which has given them some useful advice. They'll remember you as an expert when they come to make a purchasing decision.

5 Less is more

When you write copy for online advertising less is definitely more. In B2B campaigns you're likely to be targeting busy professionals who are time poor and only have a few moments to read your message and respond. They will have their own daily pressures to contend with and you need to catch their attention in a few short words or sentences. Long, wordy adverts simply don't work.

Consider the following when writing your advertising copy for on-site creative, email adverts or lead generation campaigns:

- **Keep it short**
 - If you can't get your message over in a succinct and effective way you may need to rethink what you're trying to say.
- **Keep it simple, straightforward and to the point**
 - Don't try to advertise everything all in one go. Focus on one business issue that your product/service/solution can solve, at a time.
- **Try to be different and stand out from the crowd**
 - For example, if several software suppliers are all advertising at the same time it can be difficult to see the difference in their approach
- **Try to avoid words like 'system', 'integration', 'data'**
 - They won't inspire users to click on your ad and find out more. You need to try and make even the most dry subjects come to life on the screen
- **Adapt your ads to suit the aim of your campaign**
 - If your campaign is just about brand awareness, focus on your brand and the main selling points of your product/service/solution.
 - If your campaign is designed to generate leads, focus on describing the download, paper, article, offer, trial etc that you're using as the hook.

If you're not the world's most accomplished copywriter (and many marketers aren't, whether they admit it or not!) ask your media provider for help. Most will be able to offer insight into what works best and some may offer complimentary copywriting services for advertisers. Work with them to come up with something that you're both happy with.

If you feel compelled to write more or give more people more information think about other solutions that your media provider may provide. These may include:

- Publication of opinion or thought leadership articles which help to position your business as an expert in the field
- Offering other pieces of collateral such as white papers and how to guides to a website for publication on an on-going basis
- Publishing press releases on a website
- Keeping notable editors of industry websites abreast of events or product launches. If they feel it's news-worthy, you could gain instant free publicity and coverage.

6 Did you get my message?

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7 If at first you don't succeed....

Not all online campaigns are instantly successful. Despite the many benefits online has over traditional forms of advertising, for some it doesn't 'click' straight-away.

Campaigns are generally less effective because one or more of the tips here have not been followed.

If you find yourself in this situation there are several things that are worth trying. Most importantly, listen to the advice your media provider is giving you. They know what works and how to get the best results from their audience. They're the experts and they will want your campaign to work just as much as you do.

Consider the following:

- **Refresh your copy or your on-site creatives**
 - Could your message be punchier, shorter, more attention grabbing? Audiences will scan your message in seconds. You need to say something special if you're going to get their interest and persuade them to read on.
- **If your campaign is designed to drive response, try a different download or offer**
 - Maybe what you're offering as a 'hook' just isn't tempting enough. Give your potential customers something they can use and value in their daily lives.
- **Think about your campaign from the point of view of a customer**
 - We are all consumers of products and services. Think about the advertising that you notice on a daily basis. Why does it catch your eye? What kinds of messages/campaigns do you tend to respond to both personally and as a professional?

8 Taking the lead...

During or after you've run your advertising you need to make sure your own team is geared up to deal with the response.

Unlike traditional media, a well executed online, lead generation campaign can create hundreds of responses which need to be followed up quickly and effectively.

You need to make sure your sales and marketing teams are ready to act when responses are received and have a coherent approach to generating sales from each lead. Make sure they're aware of the advertising that has been run and the message that respondents would have been given.

There is nothing more unprofessional or damaging to your brand than a salesperson making a call and not knowing why someone is interested in your products and services or where they have received contact details from.

And finally, we're including these again because they are the things that advertisers get wrong time and time again and yet are so vital to successful optimisation:

- **You only get out what you put in**
 - A quality offer = a quality response

- **Less is more**
 - Please keep your advertising copy brief!.

9 Wrapping up...

B2B advertisers are waking up to the fact that their customers are changing and conducting more business over the internet. In order to connect with them they need to be moving some if not all of their advertising online.

Some companies have grabbed online advertising and run with it, committing large proportions (in some cases even 100%!) of their marketing budgets to online activity. Others are more tentative about this unknown world of online advertising, particularly where budgets are tight.

However, the opportunities and benefits that online offers B2B advertisers far outweigh any that more traditional forms of media can offer. It absolutely should not be viewed as a risk or an experiment. Try it and you'll be hooked!

When you come to advertise online use this guide as a starting point and you will soon be reaping the rewards.

10 About Sift Media

Sift Media is a leading B2B publisher specialising in interactive business communities – serving over 250,000 members with content via its websites, email bulletins, industry awards and events.

Advertising with Sift Media puts you in touch with our audience in a trusted, professional and unobtrusive environment, enhancing the success of your online branding and lead generation campaigns.

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