Display Advertising

Display advertising in a nutshell is a form of paid digital advertising using either text, images, rich media (animations/flash) and videos that can be placed on a variety of online media like web pages, videos, and apps. It can be a powerful facet in your multi-touchpoint marketing approach if used appropriately. Display advertising is primarily best for campaigns that focus on raising brand awareness, driving traffic and reaching new customers.

The Most Common Ways to DO Display Advertising

**Google:** Via Google AdWords, creating display campaigns gives you access to Google’s vast Display Network. Google’s Display Network (GDN) has access to over 2-3 million websites that reach around 95% of internet users worldwide, if not more! The Display Network is built up out of websites who essentially sell advertising space and Google’s own products and partner sites like Google Finance, Blogger, Gmail and YouTube.

**DoubleClick:** Also a Google Product, DoubleClick is generally used by bigger businesses willing to invest large quantities into programmatic real time bidding. Double Click goes a step further than Google’s Display Network, offering most of what GDN does, but essentially has access to even more (higher quality) websites outside of Google’s network including premium ones like BBC.com and the Telegraph.

**Facebook Ads:** Growing in popularity and capability, Facebook Ads are another method of delivering display advertising in the shape of native, banner and interstitial ads. Ads are displayed on third-party apps and mobile websites and although it is nowhere near in size compared to Google’s Display Network, advertising on Facebook’s Audience Networks comes with Facebook’s advanced audience targeting options. If you already run regular ads on Facebook and Instagram, it’s an easy step to include the audience network as a placement option and to see what display advertising can do for you.

Ad Types in Display Advertising

There are a lot of different options for types, formats and media when doing display advertising. There is not right answer when it comes to which type is the best, it depends entirely on your audience, goals and resources for you to pick which one or combination of would suit your campaign.

**Text ads:** Similar in appearance to search ads as they are text based, but can appear all across the display network.

**Image Ads:** The most common form of display advertising, image ads use a combination of graphics and text.

**Video Ads:** Video ads can be used across the display network in various formats. One of the most popular methods of doing video ads is via YouTube. YouTube is a great place to use video ads, being able to place them before, during and after videos. You can also place video ads on YouTube’s homepage, next to featured videos and in video search results.

**Rich Media Ads**
Rich media ads can feature images, text, video and some form of animation and interaction. They generally require some form of user interaction like hovers, peels, click to expand and swipes.

**Mobile Ads:** In targeting it is often possible to specify or to bid differently on device types. Especially when your product, service and/or website is mobile specific or mobile friendly, it is worth creating specific mobile ads which are designed to work on smaller screens and have mobile friendly destination pages.

**Native Ads:** The idea behind native ads and sponsored content is that the ads blend seamlessly into the hosting website’s design and blends in with the organic content on the page.

**Google Smart Display Ads:** If you don’t know what the best way is to target and set up your campaign and have the time to tailor your creatives then Smart Display Ads could be a good solution for you. Give AdWords a set of images, your logo, a target CPA and your daily budget and Google does the rest; placing responsive ads in places where they’re most likely to drive conversions based on your conversion history. Because they use historic data, using Smart Display Ads requires you to already have either 50 conversions on the Display Network or a 100 on the Search Network.

**Instream Ads:** These are video ads placed before, during or after a video. They can also be found in apps, making users watch a video in order to use the app.

**Dynamic Remarketing Ads:** Serve customers who’ve been looking at a specific product on your website ads featuring that product. This requires Google Merchant Centre to function.

**Targeting Options**

Knowing your audience can not be stressed enough, especially when you’re investing in paid search, social and display advertising. Understanding who you’re targeting is an important factor in every step of the decision making process when setting up display advertising. Ask yourself the following questions first?

- What are your goals for this campaign and how does that relate to your audience? For example, are you wanting to increase brand awareness, drive traffic to your website, make a purchase or encourage people to contact you? This all drills down to where in the funnel (if at all) your audience is regarding your product or service and what type of advertising best suits that stage.

- What are the main interests of your audience? What type of websites do they browse? What sort of videos do they watch? What apps are they most likely to have on their phone? This should give you an idea of where your audience most likely to encounter your ad.

- How much is this audience worth to you? Ensure that you understand this when setting your budget for a campaign as it effects how much you’re going to spend on creating media and what you’re willing to bid.
Using Google Adwords gives you access to various targeting options:

- **Keyword/Contextual Targeting:** This method of targeting places your ads alongside content that matches your keywords.

- **Placement Targeting:** This method gives you the ability to choose the domain(s) that your ads appear on. Similarly this also gives to the ability to exclude websites you don’t want your ads to appear on.

- **Interest Targeting:** This targets Google’s estimates of what a person’s interests are based on their behaviour online and serves people with the selected interest your ads.

- **Topic Targeting:** This allows you to show your ads on sites that Google determined to be related to your product or service.

- **Demographic Targeting:** For Google’s Display Network you are able to target age, gender and parental status.

- **Remarketing Audiences:** This gives you the ability to serve ads to people who have either visited your website before, watched specific videos on your YouTube account or are on your email list. You can serve them specific ads based on their engagement with your content.

- **Similar Audiences:** Using your remarketing lists, Google is capable of creating similar audiences that match your existing audience based on their online behaviour, interests, demographics and other factors.

It’s also possible to combine these methods and do “Audience Layering” for clearly defined audiences.

**Doubleclick** shares much of the same targeting functionality as Google’s AdWord plus some additional features such as display environment, inventory, and ad positions.

**Facebook** is renowned for its granular targeting functionality. Like Google Adwords you can create remarketing lists and lookalike audiences based on website visitors, email lists, Facebook video views and Facebook page interactions. However, Facebook’s demographic and interest targeting options go beyond Google’s targeting capacities and are generally more accurate. This is because rather than Google determining this information based on your behaviour online, Facebook gets this information because people tell Facebook when they update their info like relationship status, work places, post life events and like interest pages.

Similar to Google, you can combine some of the targeting options on Facebook, meaning you can create some very specific targeting. E.g. You could target specifically to British women in their 30s, who have previously visited your website, have children between the ages 3 and 5 and have also expressed an interest in badminton. Be careful, sometimes your audience can be too defined and specific, which limits your reach.
Creative Best Practises

When creating your ad; be it video, image or rich media please take the time that you look up the format guidelines which specify ratios, file sizes, rules and any other requirements for the ad type that you are creating. Firstly, this ensures that your creative will get accepted by the ad serving platform that you’re using and secondly that it’s visually optimised for all the possible placements.

Below are some best practises to keep in mind when thinking of your ad creative:

Image Best Practises

- Have a clear call to action (CTA) that will make people click on your ad. E.g. “Buy Now”, “Read More” and “Download Now”.
- Keep your creative in brand. Feature your brand colours, fonts, logo and other distinguishable elements so people will associate and recognise your brand.
- Make your ad stand out, it will be competing against a lot of other content simultaneously.

Video Best Practises

- Define a clear audience for creating your video or videos, what works for one audience may not work for another.
- Start strong and include your unique selling point (USP) and CTA within the first 3-5 seconds of the video. With short attention spans and the ability to skip videos after a certain period of time (ranging from 3 to 5 to 10 seconds), you need to get your most important information across quickly.
- Make your meaning clear to the viewer with and without sound. Videos are increasingly being watched with sound turned off. Use text and clear storylines.

Overall Best Practises

- Make your ads relevant to the user, and that they lead to relevant destination pages that deliver to content promised in the ad.
- Keeping testing! See what imagery worked well and what did not. What copy performed the best? Which video edit had more conversions?
- Refresh your creative! The same images, video and text will progressively get annoying and also ignorable.

Key Performance Indicators

Because there are so many different options for ad types and targeting, monitoring your campaign performance is key for determining what works best for you and if your current set up is performing.
Some KPIs to consider:

- **Impressions**: Impressions show how many times an ad has actually shown on a page. Low numbers of impressions can be for various reasons such as not bidding enough, low quality score, wrong placements, etc.
- **Reach**: The number of people that have actually seen your ad.
- **CPM (Cost per 1000 Impressions)**: Display advertising is generally sold on a CPM basis.
- **Clicks**: How many times your ad has been clicked.
- **Cost per Click**: How much those clicks cost you.
- **Click through Rate (CTR)**: This the amount of times your ad has been clicked over the total impressions it receives. High click through rates generally indicate that you have an eye catching and engaging ad.
- **Visits**: Not every click actually ends up with someone visiting your website. Visits do measure the amount that do.
- **Conversions**: The amount of times that the visitors to your website from your ad completed a specific tracked action like visiting the website, completing a form, clicking through to somewhere, purchasing something etc.
- **Cost per Conversion**: How much did it cost you for each conversion that you’ve achieved with your advertising campaign?
- **Revenue**: If people can make purchases on your website, eCommerce can track and attribute revenue to specific conversions. This way you can calculate your Return on Investment by seeing how much revenue your display advertising campaign has generated versus spend.

**Things to Keep in Mind**

**Brand Safety**
The events of March 2017 where major brands like the Guardian, Marks & Spencer and UK governmental organisations had content appear alongside extremist’s videos on YouTube having highlighted the importance of appropriate brand safety measures for display advertising campaigns.

Make sure that when you’re setting up your campaigns that you exclude any websites, website categories, and topics that are not suitable for your brand like mature, tragedy, conflict, social issues, etc. Build yourself a blacklist of keywords that you don’t want your content to be associated with.

**Lower Performance Rates than Search**
Overall display ads are found time and time again by marketers using both display and search ads to have lower CTRs and conversion rates. The simple explanation is that this is because display ads are generally served to people a lot higher in the conversion funnel than with search ads.

People who are being served search ads are doing so because they’ve specifically searched for something and having solidified interest and intent towards the information/product/service being advertised making it much more likely that they’ll click on your ad and convert. This does not mean that display ads are less good than search or less effective, but that they have a different purpose.
Don’t Pester People
There is a reason everyone has 1 or 2 ad blockers installed on their browsers these days. Minimise interruptive marketing and monitor the frequency with which people see your ads. More than 1-2 times a day is too much.

Become an Expert
There are some great resources out there for a range of experience levels! Both Facebook and Google offer “qualifications” in their respective marketing platforms, Facebook Blueprint and Google Partner, which include free comprehensive how-to courses on various aspects of digital marketing.

Stay Up to Date
The industry is constantly evolving and optimising, with rules and best practices changing frequently. Stay on top of the changes and adjust your campaigns and strategies as you go along.