Paid Social

Before getting started on paid social it’s important to identify where you’re going to do it, what you’re trying to achieve and who you are targeting. There are various social networks that enable advertising and it’s important to consider which one best suits your goals and is used by your audience. Below are some of the bigger players, but they are certainly not the only social networks you can advertise on.

**Facebook**: Facebook is undeniably the behemoth in paid social marketing with over a billion monthly active users. It can be as simple as boosting your organic posts to get more reach and engagement to running various targeted campaigns and ad sets via Facebook’s Business Manager.

The benefits of Facebook? It has VAST reach across a range of demographics, good analytics and advanced targeting. It’s a great place to get started with paid social and to reach new customers with. Basic targeting lets you select location, language, age range and gender. Detailed targeting gives you access to enhanced demographics such as income, home situation, work, education, and it also lets you target interests and behaviours such as cultural affinity, purchasing behaviour and residential profiles. Target validated audiences by creating custom remarketing lists and lookalike audiences.

Other than nifty targeting, Facebook is a good stepping stone into display marketing and offers a decent selection of campaign objectives and ad formats. Options include image ads, carousel ads, video ads, slideshows and expandable canvasses. Downsides? You need to be absolutely clear on what your campaign objectives are to be able to target and monitor it correctly. Also, click-through rates (CTR) and engagement can be lower on Facebook compared to other social media sites like Twitter and Instagram. People generally aren’t on Facebook to follow brands and businesses.

**Twitter**: Targeting on Twitter, although not as advanced and accurate as Facebook’s, has a lot of possibilities. Basic functionality includes language, location, age, gender, device, behaviour, interest and keyword targeting. Most interestingly, Twitter lets you target the followers of a particular account which is great for serving ads to your competitor’s audiences, or an influencer’s audience.

Furthermore, Twitter has sound integrated analytics and a plethora of advertising options. You can promote tweets, your account or pay to get a hashtag trending. Campaign objectives for promoted tweets include, amongst others, app installs, lead generation, website traffic, brand awareness and product promotion. Unlike Facebook, Twitter’s users actually do use it to keep up to date with brands and public figures, meaning they’re generally more receptive to being marketed to by brands. Twitter sees high CTRs compared to other social networks but is also experiencing rising costs.

**LinkedIn**: Paid social on LinkedIn is fantastic if you want to target other businesses, this is THE network for social business to business (B2B) marketing. Targeting is highly focused on industry, job titles, skills, education, business size, etc. It will enable you to reach the right businesses, and more importantly, the right people within that business. LinkedIn lets you place ads in the sidebar, newsfeed and more importantly, straight to your target audience’s LinkedIn inboxes in the guise of a helpful outreach email.
**Instagram:** It’s easy to confuse Instagram adverts and Facebook adverts as you need a Facebook page to advertise on Instagram and they share much of the same functionality. However, they are different social networks with different purposes and users. Facebook is used by a broad range of demographics, whilst Instagram is definitely more popular with younger audiences.

Instagram’s targeting is not as accurate as Facebook’s but much of the same functionality is present. Like Facebook; Instagram supports photo, video, carousel and sponsored story content. Notable is the different in purpose between these two social networks, Instagram is all about beautiful imagery and inspiration and that is the type of content you’ll have to serve up if you want your campaign to perform well. Instagram is also predominantly a mobile platform, which is important to keep in mind if you’re driving traffic to a webpage or aiming for a specific type of conversion. Ensure that your end goal is not only mobile friendly, but also mobile appropriate. For example, people are happy to browse holiday content and be inspired on their phones but they’re less likely to actually book a holiday on it.

**Doing Paid Social Smartly**

Getting the right content to the right people (and at the right time) requires data-based targeting, and this comes at a premium. Critically the price is influenced by how intelligently we understand each user and how relevant our content is to them, how accurate the targeting is and how well other advertisers are performing; so continuous measuring and optimising is crucial to insure we have a positive Return on Investment.

**Brand Awareness**

If you’re doing a campaign on a social platform and your goal is to raise brand awareness then the metrics you’re going to want to be primarily looking at are Impressions, Reach, and Actions/Engagements. You want to see if your ad is being seen by people by monitoring reach and impressions, but you also want to see if it’s resonating with your audience. Ads with high engagement rates featuring likes, comments, shares/retweets, link clicks, etc. indicate that the content in your ad is interesting to the people seeing it. Various social networks allow you to track whether engagements were positive or negative and what the general sentiment is towards your content. Make sure that your ad isn’t getting attention for the wrong reasons!

Another metric to look at which is only readily available in Facebook at the moment is Ad Recall Lift – the likelihood that people will recall your ad after a certain length of time. This an estimate based on your ads performance, time spent looking at it and surveys Facebook conducts on people who have seen and not seen your ad. It’s a good way of putting an estimated number to how many people’s awareness of your brand has actually been affected by your campaign.

**Traffic**

If your objective is driving people to your website then your main metrics to look at are clicks, click through rate (CTR), Cost per Click (CPC), Unique Link Clicks and Landing Page Views/Visitors. You want to see how many times your ads were clicked, by how many people, and at what cost. CTR helps you determine how good your ad actually is at driving those clicks, low CTRs indicate that the ad has been clicked on a very low amount of times compared to the amount that it’s been seen. It’s good to run creative tests to see what imagery and copy drives higher CTRs and at a lower cost.
Looking at Unique Link Clicks and Landing Page Views/Visitors gives you additional insight. Unique Link Clicks shows how many people clicked your ad rather than how many times it’s been clicked. The same person may click the same ad multiple times. Landing Page Views/Visitors shows you how many people actually made it on to your website and destination page after they’ve clicked. If there is a significant drop off between this and clicks you need to review your landing page’s performance, maybe the website is taking too long to load. It’s definitely worth monitoring outside of your social advertising if the traffic driven from this campaign is relevant to you and your brand. What are the bounce rates like, how much times is spent on the website and specific pages, and if the traffic from this campaign is converting at higher, lower or equal rates than other traffic sources?

**Content Engagement**
Beyond looking at the standard engagements with your ad and their sentiment, there are another couple of metrics you should be monitoring depending on the content that you’ve shared. If you’ve shared a website link you’ll want to track Clicks, CTR, Landing Page Views, Bounce Rates as well as post engagement.

It’s great if there are high engagement rates with your ads, but not so great if a very small proportion of that interaction has actually led to people following the link and reading the content. Likewise, with video content you want to look at the number of video views you’ve racked up, cost per view, average video watch time and what percentage of the video most people actually watch. There is usually a large drop off after 25%, so it’s important that you optimise your video content for this behaviour. Don’t have your core message sitting at the end of the video!

**Lead Generation**
Social networks are a great place to run lead generation/data capture campaigns as you can easily reach new customers with them. With optimising lead generation campaigns it’s important to test ad copy, creatives, format, and target audience.

There can be a multitude of reasons why a lead generation ad is performing amazingly and at low Cost per Lead, or why the data capture is slow and at high costs. With copy, consider your call to action and why people should interrupt their social browsing to give you their contact details? What is your unique selling point? Will you reward people who sign up with discount codes or limited information only available to email sign ups?

Another aspect is creative, some imagery simply resonates more with an audience than another and stop people in their tracks to look at your ad. Track variations of creative and copy to see what works best. It’s also worth testing if people prefer filling out a lead gen form directly from your ad or if they prefer to be taken to your website to do it. You have to be careful with your targeting when setting up lead generation campaigns. Your audience could be too broad or too defined. If your audience is too broad, the ad is simply irrelevant to the people that see it. Too defined, and your reach could be too small to be generating the target quantity of leads that you’re after.

**Conversions**
There are various types of conversions you could be aiming for with your ad campaign, app installs, purchases, and specific website actions amongst others. For whatever your conversion goal is, ensure that you have the appropriate tracking measures in place for the campaign. The
social network that you’re using will provide guides on how to do this, but this usually involves tagging the relevant webpages or integrating your app and/or online retail centre with the social network in question.

Key metrics to look at are the number of conversions you’re achieving, your conversion rates, cost per conversion and the value of your conversions. You could be reaching your target number of conversions but your conversion rates could actually be quite low meaning you’re missing out on some huge converting potential.

Conversion rates show how many people that have seen you ad actually went on to do what you wanted them to do, if conversion rates are low look at what could be better about your ad to improve them. Areas of improvement could be targeting, creatives, objective and placements. Cost per conversion and total value of conversion help you calculate your campaigns Return on Investment. Are your ads actually driving revenue or are they costing you more than that they’re generating?

**Using Breakdowns for Deeper Insights**

Aside from investigating basic performance metrics, using breakdowns allows you to get some granular insights that could help you make improvements to your campaign which could bring down costs and increase performance.

When looking at your performance data try and break down ad performance by age, gender, location and device. This way you can exclude aspects that aren’t working, for example, a certain age group or a particular region could be driving up your costs. Identifying that enables you to exclude them from your targeting. This is also a great way to learn new things about your target audience that could help you optimise your future campaigns.

**Reasons Why Campaigns Aren’t Working**

Sometimes campaigns don’t work. They’re not hitting target or driving the desired results. Before cutting your losses, consider the following as to why this may be and what you can do to fix it.

**Wrong Audience**: Sometimes you’re just targeting the wrong people meaning your ad will not resonate. Try using multiple ad sets or campaigns for audience variations to suss out where it’s going wrong.

**Ad Relevance**: Closely tied to having the wrong audience, you have to ensure that your ad is relevant to your targeted audience. Look at your relevancy scores, engagement rates, click through rates and conversion rates to find out if this is the case.

**Bidding**: Sometimes you’re not bidding enough. If you’re doing manual bidding, most social networks give you a suggested bid that guides you in the right direction of what it takes to compete in the ad auction. Automated bidding takes the guess work out but you could end up spending more. Whatever method you’re choosing you need to know what each conversion is worth to you and set your max bid based on that.
Keeping it fresh: Sometimes all a campaign needs is a cooling off period. Especially if you’re running a longer campaign, your target audience can become oversaturated with your ads. Ensure there is frequency capping so you don’t overserve your content and refresh your imagery/video content and copy after certain lengths of times so as to avoid creative fatigue.

Performance Measures Aside

Most importantly, remember that your campaign is running on a social network, with your adverts running side by side with organic social content. Think about that when you’re creating your ad creatives and create something that will stand out will simultaneously blending in! Also remember that engagement is two way system, take the time to respond to the interaction on your promoted content just as much as you do for organic. Reply to comments, answer questions, and like shared pictures…..it doesn’t take much.