

GUIDE

Social Media Advertising

Tips for running successful paid social campaigns



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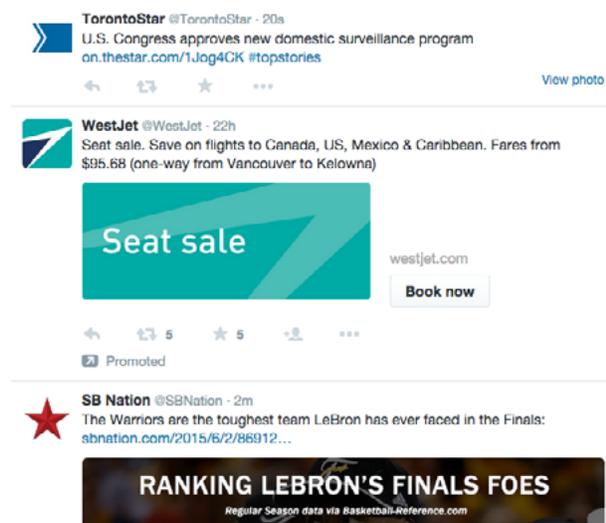
Tips for running successful paid social campaigns

If you've been hesitant to fully commit to the world of social media advertising, consider this: in 2016, Facebook earned \$26.9 billion¹ from social advertisers—which could include your competitors. It's no wonder, given the increasing effectiveness of targeted social ads compared to other channels. Promoted Tweets, for example, have shown average engagement rates of one to three percent—much higher than traditional banner ads.²

Social media advertising is a real, tangible driver of leads and sales, and marketing departments are increasing their social ad spend across the board in response.

It's reached the point where social media advertising is no longer optional, says Gartner, Inc.: "Sustained success in social marketing now requires paid advertising." According to an October 2016 survey the firm did, 80 percent of social marketers say they have—or will have—social advertising programs in 2017.³

This guide will cover the benefits of social advertising, and what it takes to run an effective social advertising campaign.



Promoted Tweet within the Twitter stream

Why social media advertising is effective

As with any ad, the effectiveness of social media advertising is dependent on using the medium correctly. In the case of social media, that means knowing your audience and ensuring that you're joining the conversation. People are more receptive to social media ads that provide value and share the qualities of great social media content, including being visual, emotional, and sharable.

Here are some of the reasons why social media could be an effective advertising tool for your business.

Targeting

Targeting is the biggest advantage of social media advertising. Where traditional advertising suffers from inefficient targeting, Twitter, LinkedIn, Facebook, and other social media advertising platforms give you the ability to reach highly targeted audiences.

Twitter ads let you target niche audiences based on their interests, who they follow, or whether you're advertising to them through other channels. If you work for a car manufacturer, for example, Twitter ads will allow you to target audiences who follow rival automotive companies. You can also target people who are similar to your current followers, which is a great way to find more relevant followers.

On Facebook, you have the ability to target people based on their distinct interests; for example, people who love aviation, snack foods, or documentaries. LinkedIn allows you to target people based on their job title or business experience. All of the data gathered by these social networks becomes an incredible advertising asset for businesses to use to reach their perfect audience.

Price

When 200 B2B marketers were asked to rate the cost of demand generation channels based on the cost per lead, just over 50 percent of the respondents ranked social media as “very low cost” or “somewhat low cost.” This compares to 42.5 percent for search ads, and 41.7 percent for display ads.⁴

The cost of Twitter ads depends on the ad type but based on how targeted your campaign is, promoted tweets or accounts might cost you anywhere from 10 cents to several dollars per engagement (video view, link click, follow, etc.). The average cost of Facebook ads will also vary between businesses and ad types. Some sources report Facebook ads averaging around 25 cents for every 1,000 impressions,⁵ while others point to it being around six or seven dollars.⁶

With Twitter, Facebook, and LinkedIn, you have the choice of using a cost-per-click (CPC) bid or a cost-per-thousand-impressions (CPM) bid. The former is a great place to start, but if your ad is performing well, the CPM model may end up being less expensive, since the impressions will come easier. Either way you will only pay for the impressions you receive. The number of impressions and clicks your ad receives will vary based on the size of your target audience and the other advertisers bidding for the same impressions that day.

Unlike other platforms for advertising, social media gives you the opportunity to test your content organically for free to see how it performs, and then only pay to promote your best content. Plus, if an ad doesn't bring you immediate results, you can pull it fast and make adjustments to your strategy.

Accessibility

Any business can use social media advertising. This simplicity is a huge advantage. The learning curve is short and the campaigns are flexible, which can save you from costly mistakes.

Tips for social media advertising

In a post on LinkedIn Pulse, Hootsuite CEO Ryan Holmes outlined six tips for using social media ads to grow your business.⁷ Here is a summary of those tips.

1. Use free social media to beta-test your paid social ads

You're likely already sending out multiple tweets, Facebook posts, and LinkedIn updates every day. Some of these messages will resonate with followers; others won't. Track which ones are being clicked, shared, and commented on. These high-performing messages make the best candidates for native social ads.

2. Take advantage of targeting features

One of the major issues with traditional ads is inefficient targeting. Twitter, LinkedIn, Facebook, and other social media advertising platforms offer very effective targeting capabilities to address that problem. From targeting social media managers on LinkedIn to Game of Thrones fans on Facebook, take advantage of this very useful targeting for more efficiency in advertising.

3. Rotate ads frequently

One of the biggest issues advertisers deal with on Facebook is ad fatigue. This means that when people see your ad too many times, they get bored of it and stop clicking. Unfortunately, when your click-through rate starts to drop, Facebook penalizes you, driving up your cost-per-click (CPC), and making likes, comments, and click-throughs more expensive. This affects both acquisition and engagement campaigns. To combat this, we suggest rotating your ads every three to five days to keep your content fresh and engaging.

4. Use small samples to A/B test your social ads

One of the great virtues of social ads is instant feedback. You can gauge the effectiveness of a sponsored post in minutes and follow up with advanced analytics reports. With all this available data, you should be sending out several “test” ads to small audiences, tracking the results, and then pushing winning ads to larger groups. It's less expensive and more effective.

5. Understand how ads are sold

Different networks sell ads in different ways. On Twitter, companies pay on an engagement basis. Facebook and LinkedIn offer the option of paying per impression. It's critical to design tweets and posts accordingly. For example, since you pay Twitter each time users click on your ads, it's important that people be genuinely interested in the content on the other side. The goal here is to drive genuine prospects to your site, not merely to attract views.

6. Design your ads with smartphones in mind

Social media is consumed overwhelmingly on mobile devices. Twitter users spend 86 percent of their time on the service on mobile. Facebook users aren't far behind at 68 percent.⁸ This means most social media ads are being viewed on mobile devices as well. As a result, messages have to be optimized for viewing on small mobile screens.

Tips for making effective Facebook ads

Paid Facebook advertising is becoming the best channel for businesses to reach their audiences since the network started cutting back on the reach of organic posts from organizations.

Here are some of the essential elements you should consider in order to create effective Facebook ads.

Speak to the right audience

Before you meet with the design team to develop your ad concept, think of the people you want to attract with your content. Over a billion people log into Facebook every month, and no matter how much of your marketing budget is invested in Facebook advertising, you won't reach everyone. Thus, it's crucial to create detailed buyer personas to help you zero in on the audience you want to attract.

Using social media analytics in Hootsuite, you can find demographic information about your Facebook audience, including their gender, age group, primary language, and geographical location. Take advantage of this information by targeting customer personas with similar attributes using an appropriate ad.

For example, if you're expanding into a new region and want to raise awareness of your business among local residents, your advertising should be translated into the primary spoken language and targeted to Facebook users whose location is set to that geographical region.

The best Facebook ads also take into account their audience's level of sophistication and familiarity with the organization. Facebook allows you to target groups of users based on whether or not they have visited your official website. This can help you decide how detailed your ads need to be: for a new audience member, the ad should include the "elevator pitch" description of your product and service, but for people who have browsed your website or online properties of similar products in the past, the ad should include more details about specific features that differentiate your offer from those of your competitors.

An ad with effective targeting



This Expedia ad appeared in the News Feed of someone who was actively researching and planning a trip to Europe in the near future. Aside from doing a great job at targeting, this ad checks off all the boxes when it comes to good ad design: it features a high-resolution image and its call-to-action is displayed in a high-contrast banner that features Expedia's brand colors. The ad copy is simple and to the point, and the offer is clear.

Define your goals

Design elements of your advertisement will vary depending on your focus. What are you hoping to accomplish with your Facebook ad? Are you driving clicks to a landing page, collecting leads, or informing people of a new product?

If your main goal is to establish brand recognition and connect with potential and existing customers, it's important to create eye-catching ads that people will remember, while sticking to your brand guidelines.

An effective video ad



This ad from the City of Vancouver includes a high-definition short video featuring scenes of soccer-related activities, illustrating the fun multicultural activities taking place at the FIFA Women's World Cup festivities. It also provides a clear call-to-action with a link where users can get more information, a hashtag where users can see more of the discussion around the topic, and a trackable shortened URL, which will help the City of Vancouver team determine how much traffic the ad generated.

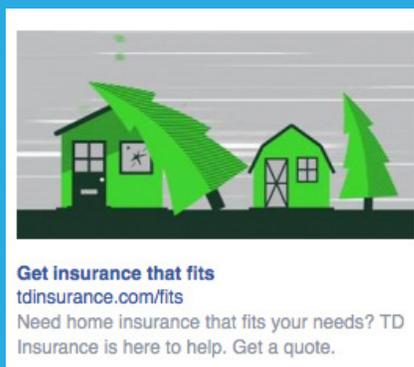
If your main focus is conversion, the definition of a successful Facebook ad is different. While it's important to stick to brand guidelines in all your public-facing messaging, the recall factor is secondary; your goal is more urgent—to get people to click on your call-to-action button. This depends on several factors: the clarity of your directive, prominence of your call-to-action button, and congruence of your ad design with the desired action. The latter means your ad should essentially act as a mini-marketing funnel, with all elements leading the user to interact with the content.

Experiment with placement and format

Facebook allows for different placements and formats of their ads. You can choose for sponsored content to appear in News Feeds or at the bottom right-hand column of the main page. You can also make the ad exclusive to a platform, catering to either mobile or desktop users. Finally, you can experiment with the format of the ad: you can choose to go the traditional image route, or create an autoplay video ad.

While you should give some thought to all the available options, your final decision should be guided by your business needs and goals. Video content on Facebook has seen spectacular growth, but it may not be the right fit for your customers on the network. The best way to test your Facebook audience's preferences in placement is to launch the same ad in two different places (for example, one in the News Feed and the other one on the right-hand side of the page), and see which one outperforms its rival.

An effective right-hand column ad



Notice that all of the copy in this right-hand column ad from TD is readable without having to expand the ad. The call-to-action is clear and simple, and it's expressed in both the ad title and copy. It also features recognizable TD colors—light green, forest green, and gray—which help the ad stand out from the rest of the content in the News Feed and right-hand column.

Be aware of Facebook's ad policies

Facebook provides extensive guidelines for advertisers on the network. Be sure to take the time to review these rules. Since all ads are reviewed by the network, it may cost you hours of work if Facebook deems your advertising content inappropriate during the review process.

Some of these rules include policies on the amount of text in image ads, click-bait or misleading images, and ads that may not be suitable for users of all ages.

Get (better) creative

The best Facebook ads provide a highly visual experience. Your ad needs to stand out among the other content on your target audience's News Feed—which is a tall order when the rest of the posts are coming from people they already know and (probably) care about. You can accomplish this by investing in high-resolution images, high-definition videos, and clever copy.

Effective visual ads



Design preferences may vary from brand to brand, but Facebook found the ads that scored the best for emotional response and brand connection had the product featured in a prominent spot in the ad, such as these Bud Light ads.



Ready to maximize your return on social campaigns with painless A/B testing and automatic ad optimization? Learn how at adespresso.com

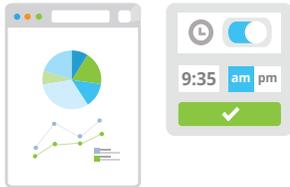
Endnotes

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About Hootsuite Enterprise

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Hootsuite is the most widely used platform for managing social media, loved by over 15 million people around the globe and trusted by more than 800 of the Fortune 1000. Hootsuite Enterprise empowers organizations to execute business strategies for the social media era and scale social media activities across multiple teams, departments, and regions. Our versatile platform supports a thriving ecosystem of social networks complemented by 250+ business applications and integrations, allowing organizations to extend social media into existing systems and programs.

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