

Online Media Planning - 5 Steps to Successful Campaign Research

By Shonda Miles

1. Identify Your Campaign Objectives

The first step is to identify your campaign objective, which can be either:

Direct Response - The campaign objective is to get the customer to make a call to action so either a purchasing decision or request for more information. An example of a direct response campaign could be a low cost airline sending out an email with the objective to get an immediate response for the consumer to book a cheap flight offer.

Brand Building - The campaign objective is to raise awareness about a brand. In this case, an example would be a banner emphasizing that an airline has more leg room in relation to its competitors.

2. Identify Your Target Audience

The next step is to define the target audience. This is dependant on the campaign objectives. A brand building exercise will typically cast a wide demographic net, for example a funky fashion retailer trying to raise awareness of their new product range will target all men and women aged between 18 and 35.

Whereas a direct response campaign may be more selective to get the best targeted response, for instance if the same retailer was trying to promote their new low waist designer jeans for women they would target only female college students who come from an AB1 household aged between 18 and 21.

There are a number of different ways in which you can define your target audience, and this is called your target demographic. Below we have identified a typical set of demographics that should be used when defining your target media consumers.

Demographic	Description	Example
Sex	Whether the target is male, female or either sex	Male
Age	The age group of the targeted audience	18-35
Earnings	The household earnings of the audience	\$50K+
Job	The position held by the audience	Media planner
Ethnic Group	The race of the desired audience	Asian
Family Members	How many members in the family	Two children
Marital Status	Whether the target is single, or married	Married

The information above makes it easier to select the correct online media for the specific campaign. There are industry extensions to demographic profiling. Standards available include; MOSAIC, an internationally recognized zip/postcode based system that can predict purchasing behavior not just by the area in which you live but even by the street, ACORN, a UK system based on census data and lifestyle information organized by postcode.

Using these standard systems can be beneficial in matching your demographic with media owners/publishers, who also use standardized demographics to identify their users. Overall, this makes it easier to identify all media that matches your requirements.

Another approach to identifying and targeting your audience is through persona creation. A persona represents a typical person within your customer base. It is a notional, real human with a name, face, motivations, attitudes and goals. When developing your personas, you need to have a good understanding of the characteristics of your customers. The key questions to pose are:

- Who are your customers?
- What are their needs and goals?
- What are they doing and how are they doing it?
- What is the environment or context of their situation?

To create personas, use information compiled from demographic, psychographic and topographic data.

Demographic

Customer profile including; age, gender, ethnicity, income, marital status.

Psychographic

These are characteristics based on the consumers' ethics, values and psychological beliefs. What other factors does the customer consider during the buying process? This data may be revealed by research, for example, focus groups, interviews and blogs.

Topographic

A model that integrates demographic and psychographics with detailed buying process data, identifying clusters or patterns. A good topographic profile will give you a view on your customers' needs and motivations.

Using the profiles shown above you can create your personas. Start with a small set of possibly four personas and extend this out after testing. The key to creating strong personas is the use of a customer story. Each persona will have a personality and you should be able to pose a problem story followed by a solution. Personas can be applied to much of online marketing.

Behavioral targeting tends to ignore traditional demographic requirements, instead focus on the behavior of a user prior to viewing the advert. Behavioral media planning works on the principle of triggers and events and is a fairly new form that is unique to the online world. Organizations using this form of media planning often find much higher conversion rates. An example of behavioral targeting is:

Behavior or Trigger

1. Customer logs on to a general portal between 6pm - 8pm
2. Then searches for local cinemas
3. Browses through results, but does not click to view movie details.
4. Clicks away from results to browse other pages

Event

Show a Rich Media overlay which promotes a new TV show on the television at 8pm tonight.

3. Competitive Intelligence

To be successful, you need to understand the performance of your competitors. The ability to use this information to your advantage based on their relative strengths and weaknesses is of key importance. There are a number of services available that log and store campaigns, from banner ads to emails sent. In addition, there are also tools from companies that are invaluable at providing detailed breakdown of site conversions, traffic, search click-through, pay per click keywords, sponsorship campaigns and affiliate traffic for all your competitors' sites.

4. Defining Campaign Reach

Campaign reach is the number of people that will be exposed to your campaign. In traditional media the metric used to be called Gross Rating Points (GRP). A GRP is calculated by multiplying reach (the number of people who will see your message) with frequency (the number times that person will see your message).

The importance of reach varies by campaign type, it is more important when running a brand building campaign than in a direct response campaign. Campaign reach can normally be estimated for all online media including search and social marketing by using tools that provide analysis of the traffic for a site.

5. Setting the Budget

Many campaigns are rolled out with a pre-defined budget however many organizations are willing to trial a campaign to gauge the ROI. Based on the performance, a company will decide on the budget to allocate. It is essential to define a budget prior to finalizing the plan.

About The Author:

Shonda Miles is a small business coach and consultant for Gotta Take Action. She invites you to sign up for Hot Marketing Tips Newsletter at www.gottatakeaction.com if you are interested in taking your business to the next level.

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