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PAID MEDIA FOR B2B LEAD GENERATION



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INTRODUCTION

Paid media is often overlooked as a lead generation opportunity by brands operating in a B2B vertical, not only is paid media a varied and often complex strategy, often B2B brands will focus their paid efforts on top of the funnel awareness campaigns which can lead to an illusion of poor returns, but with the right foundations, lead generation is possible across a range of platforms that delivers value for money and excellent opportunities for growing the brand.

In this eBook, we'll provide some fundamentals of paid media and some theory on lead generation techniques in general, with the aim of improving the general knowledge of a reader and provide some actionable tips on lead generation so that readers will be well prepared to begin, or improve existing paid media campaigns for B2B lead generation.

WHAT IS PAID MEDIA?

Paid media is the umbrella term for the wide variety of paid advertising techniques that presently exist in the digital space, including paid search (standard PPC), paid social media advertising, branded content placements, remarketing and display advertising. While many of the techniques have remained the same, there have been huge improvements in the offerings of many platforms, in the number of platforms offering a paid option and the methods available to reach the right audience.

WHY YOU SHOULD USE PAID MEDIA FOR LEAD GENERATION

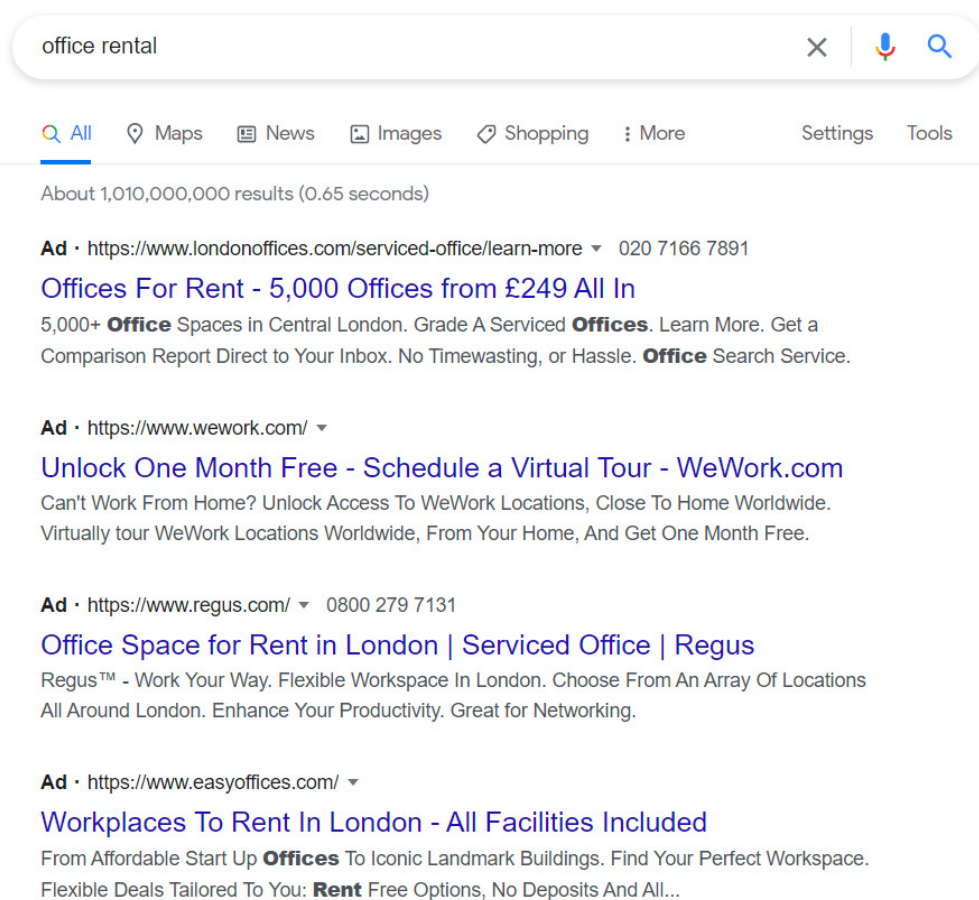
One of the key positives about paid media is the potential immediacy of its rewards. While brands should always have a long-term strategy for their digital presence, aiming to build visibility and brand recognition through investment in slower, organic search strategies, digital PR and content marketing, paid media can help to deliver consistent, useful leads up to and beyond the point where organic strategies are delivering results.

PAID SEARCH



Paid search can be a win-win for you and for your potential customers; you drive highly targeted traffic to your website, while they get to see ads that are relevant to their searches. Paid search also gives you greater control over your presence on SERPs than a reliance on organic search results alone.







In fact, according to Forrester Research, paid search spend overtook traditional SEO budgets back in 2017. As Google and Bing's (and the other search engines) algorithms continues to develop and evolve, sustained organic traction takes more effort to achieve, making paid search a good option for brands that require immediate results (although, in the long run, most brands find a combination of paid and organic techniques deliver the best results).

Paid search ads appear above organic results – and, in many cases on Google, the organic results will require a scroll down to reach:



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IS PAID SEARCH RIGHT FOR MY BUSINESS?

There are few brands that couldn't benefit from paid search in one way or another, but as with most things, it depends on what you want to achieve and on your execution. You'll need to begin by defining your goals. Once you are clear about what you want to get out of a campaign, you can then begin researching keywords, estimating cost and return and setting KPIs (key performance indicators).

We've covered the methods involved in setting such KPIs, and measuring effectiveness in other resources, but for the moment it should suffice to say that it will require intensive examination of your brand's objectives – not only what you want to achieve, but why and what you need your consumers to feel for them to act as you require.

PAID SEARCH FOR LEAD GENERATION

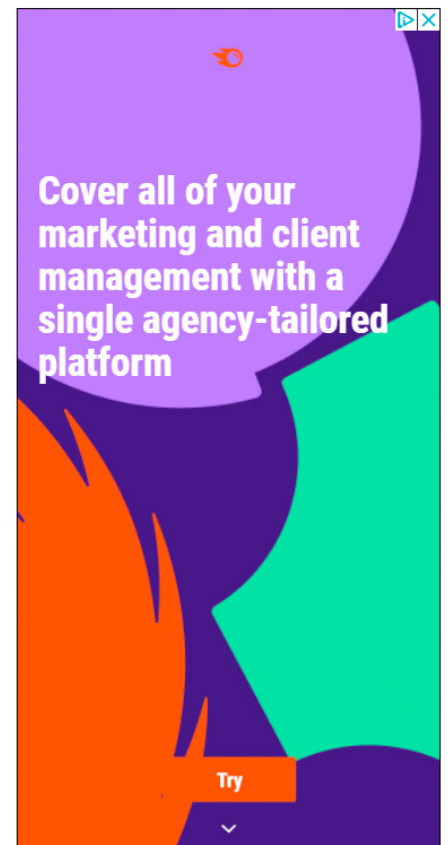
Your ads will appear when people are actively searching for the products and services your business offers. You need to ensure you send searchers to a landing page containing content that is highly relevant to their search, intent and expectations, includes a clear call-to-action (such as a call-back request form, email subscription form, downloadable brochure etc.) and which outlines what they can expect from the process.

REMARKETING FOR LEAD GENERATION

Your ads are shown to a group of people that have already engaged with your brand's site. Whether those who have performed a specific action (downloaded a resource), or – depending on your access to first party data – have visited specific pages or watched specific videos, you will be able to create remarketing lists which will allow you to target potential leads with special offers or other incentives to convert. While your ad will seek to remind them of the issue that led them to you in the first place and indicate how you can help them solve it, the requirements or the landing page require the same.

HOW TO MEASURE PERFORMANCE

Your target may be to generate 100 leads at a CPA (cost per acquisition) of £10 per lead. You can set a CPA target in Google Ads directly, which can then be monitored. Success in this instance could be an increase in recurring revenue, or average lifetime value of users – or simply with a numeric target, with a specific number of leads set as the measure of success (though this provides little indication of their quality).



PAID SOCIAL

Paid social is a tricky subject to cover in brief as there are a dozen potential platforms that brands could use – each with ad offerings that vary considerably. The main issue with paid social as a lead generation technique is that brands often suffer from a one-size-fits-all approach to social platforms, spreading themselves thinly across all available platforms (both organically and with regards to ad budgets) rather than focus on the platforms that can best serve their needs.

For that reason, our main recommendation here is often to narrow that focus, redirect budgets to platforms which best reflect your consumer demographic (there would be little use, for example, in an ‘over 50s life insurance’ brand advertising on TikTok) and seek to refine your approach there

WHAT IS PAID SOCIAL?

As with ‘paid media’ itself, paid social is an umbrella term which describes as a single thing a huge number of independent ad offerings from social media platforms with hugely disparate demographics, uses and attitudes. Simplified though this term may be as a description, it is intended to differentiate these advertising options from the organic posting and general consumer use of these platforms.

IS PAID SOCIAL RIGHT FOR MY BUSINESS?

There is almost always a social media platform that will suit the requirements of any brand – the important thing is to find it/them before investing, or to conduct testing across platforms if there appear to be reasons for using several. Not every social media platform has a specific lead generation ad format (featuring a form, or some other way of submitting contact details), but every platform has ads that can drive potential leads to a sign-up or contact page.

You can find our summary of the pros and cons of many of the advertising platforms available in an infographic here, but knowing how your business operates will give you some idea of which platforms will best suit your brand. Operate luxury conference venues in exotic locations, or rent classic or high-end cars? Instagram’s visual nature and younger demographic may suit your needs,

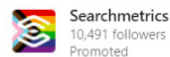
LINKEDIN FOR LEAD GENERATION

What really sets LinkedIn apart from other social media advertising platforms is its optimised targeting options, driven by the quality and detail of the personal and professional data members share in their profiles.

Want to focus on professionals in a certain sector who are interested in technology and based in a certain location? Reach CEOs of businesses with more than 1,000 employees who might need your services? You can really hone in and connect with specific professionals who you've earmarked as potential leads using this platform.

To give you taster of LinkedIn advertising here are our top tips:

- Make sure your buyer personas are well-defined before you start. This will help you deliver the right messaging to a specific subset of LinkedIn members.
- Combine the Job Function option with the Seniority option to reach decision makers with a specific expertise. For example, if you're looking to reach decision-makers in the IT function, try targeting the Information Technology, Engineering, and Operations functions and pairing that with a seniority targeting of Senior, Manager, Director, VP, CXO, and Owner.
- Avoid limiting your reach by targeting only a few titles. When you begin entering a title in the tool, Campaign Manager will auto-suggest other relevant job titles that you may want to add. You can also broaden the scale of your campaign by targeting both current and past holders of a given Job Title. These members may have changed roles but still have relevant skillsets and be of interest to your business.
- Company Size is one of the options where excluding options works well if your business caters to businesses in a specific stage of growth.
- Before selecting Industry targeting, look at LinkedIn Pages from a few companies that fit your options to see which industry they fall under. Consider including all relevant industries in your targeting.
- Lookalike audiences let you target ads to people who are similar to your existing customers, website visitors and target accounts and new predefined audience templates.
- Before selecting the Groups option, do some research on LinkedIn homepage to find relevant Groups. The larger and more active groups will typically appear at the top of the list.
- Don't over-target as it could limit the scale of your campaigns and reduce performance.



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You can find out more about using LinkedIn ads by downloading A Marketer's Guide to LinkedIn, or look for guidance on any of the other social media platforms on our resource page.

BRANDED CONTENT

Branded content is most often associated with organic search strategies – created to either earn links, or improve visibility, but the same content can and should be used as part of your paid media strategy.

WHAT IS BRANDED CONTENT?

Branded content – whether it's placed on a brand's site or an external publisher – is the resources, guides, infographics, etc. that brands will create in order to earn links, or compete for keywords and improve visibility. While there are business reasons for the production of this content, the best of its kind is always created to assist the consumer with a problem that they may be having. In doing so, this content also helps to build trust and increase the likelihood of an eventual conversion.

IS ADVERTISING BRANDED CONTENT RIGHT FOR MY BUSINESS?

Simply put, if you're producing quality content for SEO purposes, then you should consider using it as part of your paid media lead generation campaigns. This is, obviously, dependent on making sure your keyword research is good, and that you're promoting the right content at each stage of the conversion funnel and to the right audience, but if your content is good, there should be no reason you shouldn't promote it across paid as well as organic channels.



TECHNIQUES TO CONSIDER

As promised, we're going to add in some techniques here to help you get the most out of your lead generation campaigns.

CREATING PERSONAS

In various research projects, both from Click Consult and industry bodies, it is confirmed time and again that one of the leading factors in customer loyalty, and in selection of brands to purchase from, is the level of affinity they feel for the brand – and this is largely achieved through personalisation and targeting.

WHY CREATE CONSUMER PERSONAS?

Consumer personas should be at the core of a data-driven strategy. These personas are idealised versions of your prospective or existing customer base, and the primary focus of your lead generation strategy will be to ensure that your site is as relevant, engaging and useful to these personas as possible.

Though, of course, these should be open to change based on the data you discover later in your campaigns, it is important for you to have at least a sketched outline to build upon and add to. Though a good marketer will ensure that there are routes and entry points that begin a consumer journey in various places, the destination for each should be conversion.

For this reason, it makes the process easier to know who you want to take these journeys and, therefore, how to lead them through all of the various paths to converting as a lead. The following represents key aspects of research to consider when developing these personas.

As stated previously, there is no one size fits all – but all good persona creation will consider these aspects:

Target demographic (industry specific)

At the point of beginning a business venture, there will have been at least some knowledge of where and to whom similar companies are pitching their goods and service. Though it is increasingly the desire for online consumers to receive highly relevant marketing, at this point it is safe to generalise – think of this stage as a rough sketch, the detail and shading of your personas will come later.

Device use

Understanding how your consumers (both existing and idealised) use their devices is important for a number of reasons – not least of which is in the development of your site following the move to Mobile First Google update which indexes the mobile version of a site first as a priority to un-optimised or desktop only optimised sites.

Device use also offers correlation with intent – with buyer research, search investigation, and resultant purchasing being performed predominately on desktops (see table above), while solution-based searches, local searches and voice searches tend to drive mobile intent.

Being able to determine device intent will feed directly into any good search marketing campaign, granting rather than permitting brands the ability to design a strategy which permits cross-platform journeys and personalisation, nurturing consumer relationships to increase eventual conversion whichever device they use.

Usage charts

As much as knowledge of device use will help you to plan your site and the way you deliver product and service information, knowing about the times of consumer use is also important in deciding time dependent parts of any strategy. If, for example, use peaks in working hours then this should be your focus for updates, offer message, fresh content and the like.

Brainstorming

As with an organic keyword strategy, we'd recommend creating buyer personas – archetypal consumers of your goods or services with which you can plot levels of intent and queries that may typify these stages. Though consumers are never the same individually, a large enough consumer base will allow for more generic assumptions so that personalisation to a number of personas can lead to a greater appearance of personalisation throughout the conversion funnel.



TAILORING THE JOURNEY

Brands shouldn't simply show the same ad to all consumers at all points of the journey and expect to achieve the best results possible. While a great ad can bring in leads, it's vital in the digital age to tailor your ads to numerous segments of your audience and to their levels of intent.

Which platforms are usually best for each stage in the buyer's journey?

UPPER FUNNEL - AWARENESS

Google Display Network

Enabling the building of brand or need awareness, regular and static GIFs can be placed using broad keyword and topical targeting (as well as strong branding) to build desire.

Display advertising

Whether you use pop-out catalogues, static pop-outs, or video – ads using rich media formats are great for initial exposure. By ensuring strong and consistent branding across formats, there is plenty to do that can raise awareness of a product or need.

Remarketing

Arrival on your homepage demonstrates an initial interest or brand awareness. With use of retargeting cookies, visitors that have gone no further than your homepage can be targeted with branded ads to educate them on the scope and variety of products available through your site.

Search campaigns

Search campaigns are, really, better used later in the funnel, but careful research of keyword and keyword intent, followed by intelligent broad keyword bidding, can place your ads in appropriate searches for the initial 'query-level' intent.

Paid social ads

Whether on Facebook, Twitter, Instagram or any of the many other social media platforms now offering ad options, you can segment ads here by demographic to tighten the focus of specific ads, delivering a more individualized ad experience. Paid social ads also offer the benefit of reactive potential – where, in addition to targeting users on stated, permanent interests, tweet topics or post content can be tracked to deliver pertinent, highly relevant ads to social media consumers.

MID FUNNEL - CONSIDERATION/PREFERENCE

Dynamic remarketing

This is for those consumers that showed an initial interest, but for whatever reason were drawn away from the page. The dynamic remarketing approach aims to get products in front of the consumer that they have expressed an interest in your service but never become a lead.

High engagement remarketing

This variety of remarketing is really to re-engage with consumers that have shown a consistent high engagement with your site or content (be careful to set your parameters for what constitutes 'high engagement' carefully, for this variety ad you really want to be targeting users with high time on site/page view to make the most of the campaign).

Search campaigns

Search campaigns at the mid-funnel level will focus on a suitable mid-level intention – such as the search for service comparisons and reviews. Using keyword strategies which target search terms at this level of the buyer's journey the aim is to convince consumers that not only is the service they are researching the right one, but that they should be buying it from you.

LOW FUNNEL - PURCHASE/LOYALTY

Google Shopping Campaigns

Via the Google Shopping Search vertical, consumers with an easily defined, high intention to purchase can be targeted specifically with image and promotion based-ads, which seeks to capitalise on their high intent searches. By ensuring your services are in front of them at this stage, you have a much higher chance of earning the lead. In addition to this – if you have ensured your brand has been raising awareness at all other stages of the journey, the trust and awareness levels at this stage are likely to be high.

Search campaigns

Search campaigns in the lower funnel category are all about the push to purchase. By bidding on high purchase intent keywords, however, you are likely to face stiff competition. It is your responsibility for search campaign ads at this stage to really heighten the desirability of your brand over the others that will likely be competing for their attention. Provided you have been nurturing the buyer's journey at the other funnel levels you will have developed a level of trust and brand awareness that will put you ahead, but now is the time to push promotions, discounts and other payment options which will really elevate your brand over the competition. A well-executed keyword strategy here is worth the extra cost entailed in the bidding process, because at this stage you will be competing on the quality of your ads and merchandise for a far higher percentage chance of conversion.

Loyalty remarketing

Loyalty remarketing primarily targets previous converters, seeking to capture return custom through upselling and accessories. By tailoring ads to previous purchases, it is possible to predict needs - so that specific product or services could lead to remarketing ads for other complementary services, while free trial subscription can be targeted for upgrade to premium packages, thereby seeking to capitalise on an initial positive interaction to drive repeat custom.

CONCLUSION

Paid media is potentially as important for B2B brands and lead generation as it is for any eCommerce or B2C brand – there are plenty of possible opportunities to reach your target audience with the right content to educate them on the problem your brand solves, how you solve it and why they should let you.

Whether you're using captivating landing pages and search or remarketing campaigns, or advertising your user focused content and resources, you're helping consumers to reach the decision that is best for you and, hopefully, for them. Provided your paid media is executed well, this can provide a profitable and rapid return on investment that will help your brand grow while your longer term strategies reach fruition.

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ABOUT US

Click Consult is a multi award-winning search & digital marketing agency with a focus on organic (SEO) and paid search (PPC). Part of global consumer brand business Ceuta Group, we have a team of 70-plus specialists and a portfolio of more than 60 clients worldwide.

Our complementary services include content marketing, social media and analytics. We can also offer training and consultation to support your teams or existing strategy.

Click was named both SEO Agency of the Year and Organic Search (SEO) Team of the Year 2020; ranks within Econsultancy's 'Top 100 Digital Agencies', and Prolific North's 'Top 50 Digital Agencies'. We're also a Google Premier Partner, and a Microsoft Advertising Select Agency Partner.

HOW CAN WE HELP YOU?

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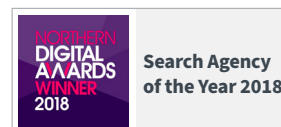
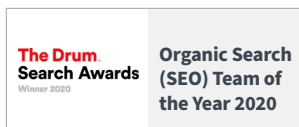
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