

Digital Media Strategy 101

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I. Campaign Strategy - When to use paid media

- A. Establish clear goals to get the most out of your money
- B. Questions to consider when you start to plan a campaign

II. Identifying Target Audiences

- A. Geotargeting
- B. Demographic Targeting
- C. Affinity and Interest Targeting

III. The Digital Media Landscape – Identifying the right platform for your ad

- A. Key Partners – Paid Social
- B. Key Partner – Paid Search
- C. Key Partner – Video Advertising

IV. Campaign Optimization

I. Campaign Strategy - When to use paid media

With limited budgets it's important to use paid media only when necessary. So, when does it make sense to spend campaign dollars on media?

- 1) **When you need to find new audiences** – Paid media is best leveraged to reach beyond your email lists and your social media channels to expand your message and reach new constituents.
- 2) **To maximize exposure with existing audiences** – Having fans and followers does not guarantee that they will see your message – amplifying your message across multiple channels can maximize the impact of your campaign.
- 3) **When free or less expensive channels are too slow or lack scale** – Paid advertising is a fast way to reach many constituents quickly. Putting money behind a timely message can reach more people faster than an email or social post alone.
- 4) **To Amplify PR and event activations** – aligning paid dollars around major events and announcements can extend the reach of the PR and magnify the moment for your campaign. At a minimum search budgets should synchronize with PR schedules to capture interest generated by the event or announcement.

A. Establish clear goals to get the most out of your money

Once you decide to invest money, it is important to establish clear goals for your ad campaign. Goals will help you select the right advertising platform and evaluate whether you made a good investment. *If your investment doesn't support a clear goal, you should reevaluate whether you should spend the money.*

- Goals should be specific and measurable:
 - **Fundraising** → Collect emails and donations.
 - **Event Activations** → Drive attendance and capture RSVPs (collect emails).
 - **Recruit New Voters** → Registration can't be tracked, but campaigns can be evaluated based actions like clicks on banners and video views.
 - **Rapid response messaging** → Drive clicks, views, and social interactions.
 - **Amplifying campaign moments** → Drive video views and social interactions.

B. Questions to consider when you start to plan a campaign

- Why am I using paid media?
- Is there a better way I could use this money?
- Is this the best time to pay to amplify my message?
- What is my competitor doing?
- Am I already achieving this goal via another route?
 - Would my PR efforts have already hit this audience?
 - Could I reach more people through community organizing than paid media?
 - Are my organic social posts truly reaching my followers?
- **Thought starter:** Is my social media campaign reaching voters already engaged with my campaign or am I building a new following? If you are reaching engaged voters, is your message intended to activate these voters to organize? If building a following, is your message targeted and focused on issues you know motivate that audience?
- **Thought Starter:** If being out-shouted by my competition, do I match on social, or do I go deeper into grassroots? Trying to shoutout your opponent might not be the answer. Look at where your campaign strengths lie and activate against your opponent in those areas first.

II. Identifying Target Audiences

Successful advertisers use targeting to achieve the following:

- Identify and retarget receptive audiences to enable repeat success.

- Expand campaigns by testing new audiences.
- Use learnings to determine what type of audiences are most receptive to a message.

It is important to note that the narrower/more niche the audience, the smaller and more expensive it will be – balancing the specificity of the audience with cost and scale is vital to maximize budgets.

A. Geotargeting

- For local or state level elections geotargeting will be required for every campaign.
- Geotargeting avoids wasted spend on people who cannot vote or have no personal stake in the local election.
- However, geotargeting can increase the cost of media, so it is important to test targeting options (county, zip code, city) to maximize your budget.
- **Thought Starter:** You are a candidate in a low income district next to several higher income districts. Test fundraising efforts by geo-targeting both your district and the wealthier districts – those with a personal stake and a higher disposable income may net a higher return on investment while keeping media costs down.

B. Demographic Targeting

- Demographic Targeting is used to reach a broad set of potential voters and allows you to segment your message based on voters' age and gender.
- At a minimum Demographic target should be used to limit your campaign's to audiences of voting age.
- Remember that language targeting is available across major platforms to enable activation of Spanish dominant/Spanish language Hispanic audiences.
- **Thought Starter:** Are you activating college students to get out the vote? Consider Instagram and leaning into meme culture to speak to that audience where they are in a relevant voice.

C. Affinity and Interest Targeting

- Most media platforms have opportunities to narrow in on audiences based on affinity/interests.
- Targeting users with messaging that matches their interests creates strong initial affinity.
- Test targeted messaging with obvious affinities, like social movements, organizations, and progressive political figures/organizations (e.g. LGBTQ, Black Lives Matter, Planned Parenthood, environment).
- **Thought Starter:** Get creative! Watching a new episode of your favorite show and have a fun fundraising message? Target local fans of the show to get out a more personalized message and show your personality.

- **Thought Starter:** Target users for events they would like (throwing a fundraiser at the theater? Find users interested in the theater!)

III. The Digital Media Landscape – Identifying the right platform for your ad

Media is highly fragmented, but there are a few major digital vehicles that are common throughout the US. Local campaigns with limited budget will rarely have to look beyond these partners to build a successful campaign.

- Social Media - Facebook, Instagram, Twitter
- Search - Google
- Video - YouTube

A. Key Partners – Paid Social

Social media will be a major focus of your digital media and marketing efforts. The three largest platforms (Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter) will all play a part in those efforts. Each platform offers unique capabilities that will help you decide what message to use on each platform.

- **Facebook** is the largest social platform in the US, and will typically be the most applicable for campaign activations. Advertisers can run text, image, and video ads on the platform. Paid media is often used to expand audiences and ensure that ads are front and center for existing audiences.
 - **Pros:** Ability to run campaigns across both Facebook and Instagram, easy donations with “Donate” button, built in event organizing capabilities, shareable ads.
 - **Cons:** Ads are easy to skip over, young people tend to not trust the platform.
- **Instagram** is the best way to reach to a younger audience with image and video-based ads. Instagram is owned by Facebook and many of the same targeting options are available to advertisers.
 - **Pros:** Connected with Facebook, highly visual, innovative communication tactics available (such as Instagram carousel ads or Instagram stories)
 - **Cons:** Limited sharing capabilities.
- **Twitter** is a conversation based platform that is great to engage with followers and push out new messaging. The platform supports both text and video ads.
 - **Pros:** Highly political platform, great place to find active conversations around relevant topics.
 - **Cons:** Limited organizing capabilities.

B. Key Partner – Paid Search (see [Google Ads 101 Guide](#) for more details)

- **Google** dominates the search market across all demographics. A strong search campaign is an effective way to accomplish the following:

- 1) Reach audiences who are actively looking for information about a topic or issue.
- 2) Control the message when potential voters are searching for you.

Search ads are sold in an auction and, just like any auction, advertisers can place bids on the search terms that they would like to surround with advertising. Pricing is determined based on the level of competition for each term.

Thought Starter: Test terms yourself by Googling them to see if there are ads surrounding the search results - if there aren't, the cost and likelihood of placing an ad next to those search terms is higher.

Staying Relevant and local is important to control cost and drive engagement.

- Only bid on terms that are featured or discussed on your website.
- Add geo-layers to your search campaigns so that advertisements only appear in your district.

Thought Starter: Environmental issues are part of your platform, bidding on terms like "Climate Change" or "Clean Water" is a great way send potential voters to your website for an explanation of your position on the issues.

- You can also use search close to the election to reach undecided voters late in a campaign.

Thought Starter: Target terms like "where to vote" and "midterms 2018" in the days leading up to the election.

C. Key Partner – Video Advertising (see [Google Ads 101 Guide for more details](#))

YouTube is by far the largest video distribution platform in the world. With its massive scale and advanced targeting options it will be among the fastest and most cost-effective ways to reach potential voters with video.

YouTube offers advertisers many product options, but their TrueView products will be the best format for a local campaign with limited budget.

TrueView allows advertisers to run ads in front of videos on the YouTube platform. It is particularly valuable because advertisers are only charged when viewers watch or interact a video. This ensures that you only spend money on meaningful ad impressions.

Like Search, TrueView ads are bought in an auction. In this case, bids are placed on audiences that you define based on demographics, location, and/or interest.

There are two types of TrueView ads: In-Stream and Video Discovery.

- **TrueView In-Stream Ads** – In-Stream ads are skippable and run in front of other video content on YouTube. These ads are best used when you want to target potential voters across the YouTube platform with videos shorter than 30 secs.

Thought Starter: TrueView ads are skippable after 5 seconds. Consider how you open your videos to convince users to continue to watch and be sure that your name and logo are visible as soon as the video launches.

- **TrueView Discovery Ads** – Discover ads run next other videos on YouTube and in YouTube search results. Discover ads are an effective way to promote longer ads

(30 secs or more) because users are actively search for the video and more likely to stay engaged.

Thought Starter: Any video that you post to YouTube can be used as TrueView ad. Consider testing video lengths, content, and styles to maximize viewership.

IV. Campaign Optimization

Once goals are established, targets are identified, and platforms selected, your campaign is ready to go live. You can improve the performance of your active campaign by measuring results in each platforms' reporting tools and employing a process called **Optimization**.

To optimize a campaign, you simply move money to the parts of your campaign that best delivers against the goals you established when you decided to invest the money.

For example:

- Goal: Fundraising
- Metric that best reflects that goal: Emails collected and donations made
- Optimization question to ask: Is the cost per email collected less on Facebook than YouTube?
- Optimization action: If the answer is yes then you can shift budget to Facebook in future campaigns to improve your return on investment.

Similarly:

- Goal: Event Activations
- Metric: Drive attendance and capture RSVPs (collect emails)
- Optimization questions to ask:
 - Did more attendees RSVP in response to a Facebook post or an email?
 - Were the RSVPs on Facebook first time event attendees?
 - Was the added cost of paid advertising worth it because you attracted new attendees?
- Optimization action: If yes for all three questions, keep investing in Facebook. In some cases, making an investment in a more expensive channel is worth it because you are reaching new constituents and/or you are driving scale that you otherwise could not achieve.

Campaign optimization can take a few forms:

1. **Partner Optimization** – Shifting budgets between digital platforms
2. **Placement Optimization** – Moving budgets between ad types
3. **Creative Optimization** – Shifting budget to support creative that best delivers against your goal

Optimization is an ongoing activity, the purpose is to learn over time where your most responsive potential voters spend their time and what content motivates them to take action. The key is to simply experiment with each optimization lever, find what works best, and then do more it.

- Media is highly targetable, and provides ways to find specific audiences