A CHECKLIST

PREPARING FOR ONLINE AD SUCCESS

Setting Goals

The long-term goal of any marketing campaign is to increase sales, whether through raising awareness or by touting the features and benefits of your latest product. But simply stating your goal is to increase sales is too broad.

Do you want people to sign up for an email? Learn more about your product? Set an appointment? Holding a sale to clear out inventory? Introducing a new product?

Setting a clear goal will help you write content for your landing page, set your target audience and write copy for your ads.

PRO TIP: Take a step or two or three back from that bottom line goal of increasing sales. How will you do it? Is this campaign for people who are unaware of you? For people who know about you but aren't ready to buy, or for people who know about you and are ready to take the next step toward purchase?

Analytics

If you don't already have Google Analytics set up for your website, install it before you launch any marketing campaign. It's the best way to determine whether your ads are working the way you want them to. It's free, and is the gold standard for tracking website performance and sales.

To create a new Google Analytics account, go to analytics.google.com and follow the instructions. Use an existing Google email account if you have one. If not, Analytics will take you through the steps to create one.

Once you've set up Analytics for your site, you'll need to make sure you've turned on "ecommerce tracking." Here are the instructions:
https://support.google.com/analytics/answer/1009612?hl=en

From there, check with your ecommerce platform (Shopify, WooCommerce, Magento, etc.) for directions to add the tracking code.

Once this is set up, you'll be able to track sales back to the source, whether from a Google search ad, a Facebook ad, or a referral from another site.

PRO TIP: If you are using Google Ads, make sure to link your Google Ads and Google Analytics accounts. To this, open you Google Ads account, go to "Tools & Settings," Under "Setup," selected Linked Accounts. Once on that page, click the details link with Google Analytics, and follow the instructions.

Budget

Online ad platforms pretty much give you complete control over how much you spend (some have daily minimums). In Google Ads you set a daily budget. In Facebook and Instagram you can set daily or monthly budgets. You can set the budget as low or as high as you want or need to.

It's often hard to "know" exactly how much to spend when you're just starting a campaign. Factors that could affect your budget are your target area (the smaller the geographic area, the less expensive your ads should be) and the amount of competition.

My advice is to be flexible and start on the less expensive side. If your daily budgets run out half way through the day, you'll want to spend more. The ad platforms are going to work hard to spend all your budget, even if it's higher than it needs to be.

Look for inflated costs per click and costs per conversion and low returns on ad spend (revenue generated by the ads divided by the ad spend).

Remember, you only pay when you get a click. So, if you set a daily budget of $50, and clicks cost an average of $5 each, you will get 10 clicks for the day. The ads stop running when the daily budget is spent.

PRO TIP: Advertising online is an experimental process until you find the sweet spots for spending, keywords, audiences and ad copy. You can change spending budgets at any time, so it doesn't hurt to experiment with higher or lower budgets. Give your changes at least a week or two before adjusting again.

Audience targeting

Who are your potential buyers? Where do they live? How old are they? What do they care about? Plan for geographic targeting for search ads, and demographic and interests information in social media ads.

Every ad platform will ask you to define your target audience. Search ad platforms, like Google Ads, will ask you for a target area, which could be a ZIP code, a city, a state, or a radius area around your business location. If you're a local business, keep your target area small. If you've got something that people would buy no matter where they are, consider advertising regionally or nationally if you've got the budget. Don't make the mistake of targeting an area larger than you need to.

Social media platforms, like Facebook, allow you target based on additional demographic information -- age, gender, income, occupation, education or interests. You can target people interested in sports, gardening, investing, pets, and many more.

PRO TIP: Facebook / Instagram requires a minimum size audience, so if you narrow your targeting too much my area or by interest you may not be able to start the ads. It's OK to start with targeting that's a little broad. As the campaign continues, you'll be able to tell what types of people are responding, and then you can focus the targeting more.

PRO TIP: The Facebook Pixel: Facebook offers a tracking pixel that you should add to your website if you're running Facebook or Instagram ads. The pixel allows you to collect extra data that can be used for remarketing ads.

Ad copy

Based on your ad goals and your targeting, get prepared by drafting what you want your ads to say. You might run into character limitations, but don't worry about those as you write some drafts. You can edit later.

Search ads should have headlines that attract attention and a call to action. The simplest example is a headline that says "Buy Blue Widgets," which will attract the attention of anyone searching for blue widgets. Be prepared to write a three-line headline (Max 30 characters in each line) and two descriptions of up to 90 characters each. The descriptions should also contain calls to action, and I recommend capitalizing each word in the ad.

For social media ads, the most important element is the image, which can be a single photo, a carousel of photos or a video. There are also text elements -- a description that looks like a social media post, a headline, a link to the landing page, and a short description. The text elements should also include calls to action, and images can contain text.

PRO TIP: I always recommend you write at least 3 different ads for each ad group or campaign. The platforms recommend that, too. Don't fall in love with your words. If the most poetic ad in the world isn't getting clicks, delete it, and try something else. PRO TIP: For search ads, adding "ad extensions" is an easy way to improve the effectiveness of ads. You can learn more about them here: https://support.google.com/google-ads/answer/2375499

Landing page

The landing page, or sales page, is the most important step in the process. If you've gone through the hard work of targeting correctly and writing an ad that somebody actually clicked, you don't want to lose that potential customer to a weak landing page.

After setting your campaign goal, create your landing page before you write ads. Make sure to include keywords related to what you're selling. The landing page should focus on a single action -- buy, shop, download, subscribe, call, etc. Don't hide the call to action in a glob of text. Make sure your customers can't miss it.

Once the landing page is finished, write ads that contain the same keywords you used for the page. That way, the landing page should fulfill the promise of the ad text.

Some landing pages are short and sweet. Others include long descriptions of features and benefits and add responses to common objections. If your landing page is longer, make sure it is easy to read by including images and plenty of white space.

PRO TIP: Make sure to insert your call to action at least once every screen length, so that a call to action is always on the reader's screen.

Credit card payment information

Have your credit card ready! Each platform will ask for credit card information to collect payment for your advertising. The billing cycle is typically monthly.

If you're running your online ads yourself, the cost of the ads is the only extra expense you'll have. If you hire someone to manage the ads, that fee will be in addition to the cost of the ads.

Notes