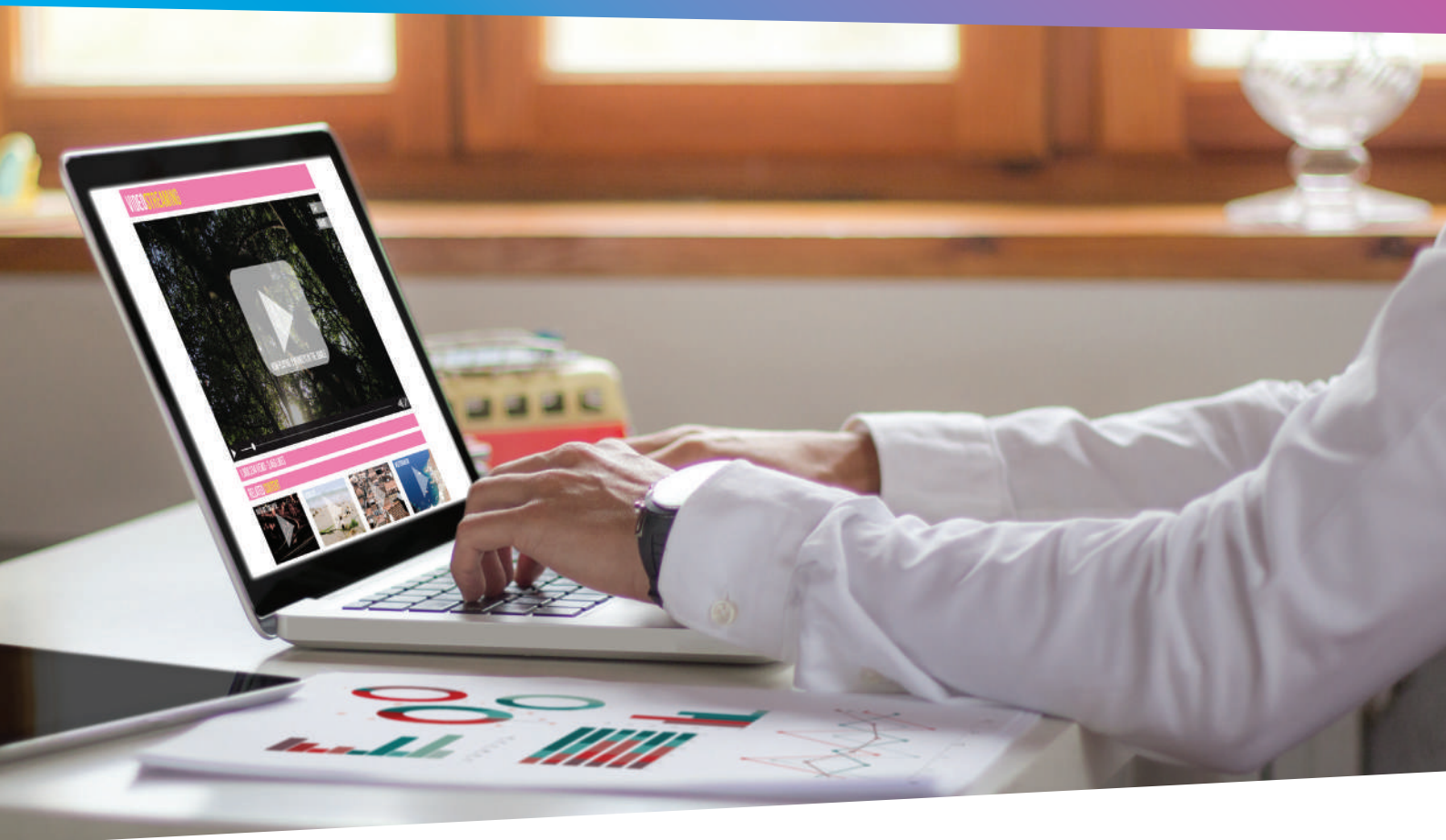


How to Run a Video Advertising Campaign: Getting the Most from YouTube, Facebook & Instagram



These days we're all online and we're all watching video, from rebellious tweens to busy executives to relaxed retirees.

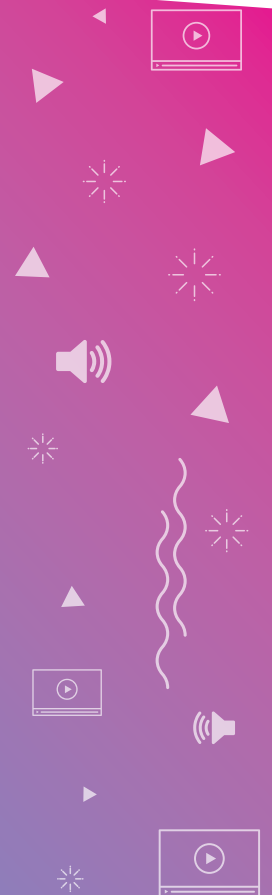
Cisco reports that video will account for 80% of all internet traffic as soon as 2020.

Your potential customers are also more savvy than they used to be, and nowadays it takes at least seven touches from a brand to turn them into a qualified sales lead. Not weird touches, but effective marketing touches. In short, you need to be giving your target audience frequent value and chances to genuinely connect across a range of channels if you want them to remember you, understand you, and eventually buy from you.

So it's no wonder that businesses and brands are spending so much time and money on integrating video into their marketing strategies. It's the ideal way to grab attentions and engage minds, especially on video-heavy social platforms like YouTube, Facebook and Instagram.

If you want to reach a specific online audience as quickly and efficiently as possible, video advertising is the best option available to you. And it's not just about broad top-of-funnel awareness — you can use it to deliver engaging content to your audience and encourage them to take a specific action all the way along their buyer's journey.

This guide will walk you through how to plan, create and implement a successful video advertising campaign to strengthen your entire marketing strategy.



Contents

Part 1. Build a Plan

What's the goal?

Who's your audience?

What's the message?

Where are you distributing?

What's the budget?

Part 2. Craft the Creative

Hook the eyes, then the heart

Use emotion to propel action

Facebook: be grabbing

YouTube: be quick

Instagram: be beautiful

Google Display Network: be relevant

Part 3. Spread the Content

Advertising on YouTube & Google Display Network

Advertising on Facebook & Instagram



Part 1. Build a Plan

Video advertising can either be done as part of a larger strategy or as a standalone marketing activity to raise awareness and generate leads. The more comprehensively you integrate video into your overall marketing and advertising approach, the more effective the end result will be. But either way, you're going to need a plan.

If you're already targeting a specific audience in existing campaigns — or will be in future campaigns — then video advertising can help to reinforce your efforts. As leads move through the buyer's journey along stages of awareness, consideration and finally decision, video ads can make sure your brand stays top of mind with relevant, targeted content across a range of platforms (websites, social channels, smart devices).

But this isn't going to work smoothly and effectively unless you know how video advertising will support your marketing goals and complement your other forms of brand communication. The first step is setting out that plan.

A Very Simple Video Advertising Plan

1. What's the goal?
2. Who's your audience?
3. What's the message?
4. Where are you distributing?
5. What's the budget?



What's the goal?

What are you hoping to achieve with your video advertising? This all comes back to how your ads will be integrated into wider campaigns or used to support your business goals.

Do you want increased awareness? Higher engagement? Boosted traffic to key pages? More conversions? Set a realistic objective that will push you without ever seeming impossible. You also need to translate this into a metric you can measure easily and tie back to your overall campaign for ease of reporting (this might be a click-through rate if you're trying to drive traffic to your site, for example).

Whatever your goal for your video advertising campaign, be sure to set it down in writing. That way you can stay accountable to what you're aiming for and keep the course even if you get distracted by every possible approach and technique. Video advertising should really be very simple, but to make it so you need a simple, clear, concrete goal.

If you're struggling to know what to set as your objective, think about what you want your audience to do after watching one of your video ads. Where should they move to in their buyer's journey? What should they be thinking and feeling? What action will reflect that? And how can you translate that into a goal you can track?



Who's your audience?

The point of video advertising isn't to reach everybody under the sun. It isn't even to "go viral". It's to target exactly who you want to target and connect with them so they take the step you want them to take.

So you need to be very clear on the audience for your ads. Will this be all your potential customers, or just a subset of them? Will you use buyer personas?

Once you know who you're targeting, it's vital that you know enough about them to communicate with them effectively. Dig into what types of content they enjoy, who they listen to, and where they spend their time online. This last one is very important to enable you to put your ads in the right place so you can actually reach your audience.

What's the message?

Next, think about how you'll combine what you want to communicate with what you know about your audience. You need to create the desired thoughts and feelings in your viewers while staying true to what they care about most. How can you grab their attention? How can you resonate with their values and hit them on an emotional level?

To feel crystal-clear about your message, work out the one thing your ad needs to get across to your audience.... to make them take the action you want them to take... to ensure you meet your goal. Never overcomplicate your message. Less is more when it comes to short, snappy video advertising.



Where are you distributing?

Based on what you know about your audience, you need to decide on which channels to distribute your video advertising. Which influencers can you associate yourself with that your viewers respect and admire? Where and when are you most likely to reach them?

The channels you choose to work with will hugely impact any video advertising campaign, from budget to creative, so it's important to nail this down early. And don't just decide to use all of them: this might seem like the easiest way to cover all your bases, but if your audience aren't there it's just a waste of time and money. Narrow down your choices to a few options that have the best odds of hitting your target audience.

The most effective video advertising channels are YouTube, Facebook, Instagram, and the Google Display Network — we'll go into them in more detail later in this guide.



What's the budget?

This final step is a fairly simple one, but it can impact everything else about your advertising campaign. How much are you prepared to spend? Always tie this back to your goal — how much is it worth to you? What budget will you need to make it happen?

Stay realistic. If you have past advertising data, use that as a benchmark for the results you'll get with future ads. If not, get the latest industry data you can find (but take it with a pinch of salt). Estimate the ROI you'll get from the campaign and work out how much you're willing to spend to get the reach, response and results you're aiming for.

Once you've worked through these 5 stages of your strategy, you should be in a strong place to dive into the warm gooey centre of video advertising: coming up with the creative.



Part 2: Craft the Creative

Creating video ads isn't just a chance to flex your creative muscles. It's your opportunity to take everything you know about your audience, the channels they spend time on, and the message you want to communicate with them — and translate it all into a short piece of video content that will generate the right emotional state to encourage viewers to take a specific action.



Er, no pressure then.

Here's how each of those three areas is going to affect the way you think about your adverts:

Audience: What do your audience care about? What will attract and keep their attention? Which values should you appeal to so they engage more with your brand?

Channels: What constraints on length and size do your chosen channels impose on your videos? Will the content need to work both with and without sound? What kind of video content is already common on these channels and how can you play with preconceptions?

Message: How can you get your message across through visuals, sound and emotion in a short space of time?

When you're creating video ads, you should begin by thinking about all the things your audience might be doing with their time online: browsing Netflix, chatting to family and friends, reading news articles, watching videos of cats being scared by cucumbers. This is your competition. This is what you'll be interrupting and what you need to draw your audience away from, briefly and pleasantly.

That's also why you always need to offer something valuable in an advert. Your video isn't there to be a nuisance or annoy your target audience. It needs to do one of these three things:

Entertain

Inspire

Educate



Otherwise, why would viewers waste their time? If your ad isn't giving them something in return, they'll either skip it (where possible) or resent you for stealing precious seconds of their life they're never getting back.



Hook the eyes, then the heart

So we know we have to start with value. Let's explore what else makes a good video ad with Dollar Shave Club, courtesy of their famously excellent first video.



Adverts fundamentally interrupt what your audience are doing, but that doesn't mean they have to be frustrating or intrusive. Dollar Shave Club's video works because it's both visually and emotionally exciting: viewers are engaged, so they're eager to keep watching.

By offering emotional value in your video — something funny, inspirational or interesting — you inject it with power. For Dollar Shave Club that means a dry, simple script and lots of visual gags. The audience learns about a useful service while also being entertained, and all in 90 seconds. They have a **reason** to keep watching.

But how do you get them watching in the first place? This is where visual elements really come into play. The most important part of any video ad is the first few seconds — that’s when you need to grab your audience and make sure they don’t return to whatever they were doing before. With action, movement, colour, contrast and appealing human faces you can capture your viewers’ gazes so they watch long enough for their interest to be piqued.

Examine the first 8 seconds of the Dollar Shave Club video. We begin with a close shot of Michael Dubin, CEO of the company, as he speaks — and looks — directly at the viewer and the camera pans slowly back. Then he’s up and moving, the camera shifts, and we’re along for the ride. But it’s that first shot which hooks us. It’s hard to ignore another human being staring into our eyes and talking to us, even through a screen, and the steady motion and cluttered, intriguing backdrop just seals the deal.

The core rule of video advertising: hook the eyes and then you can hook the heart.

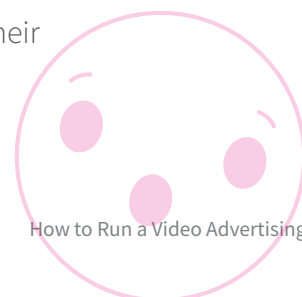
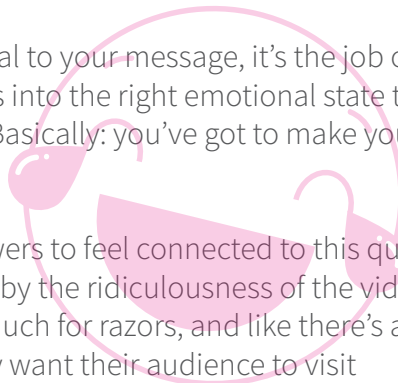


Use emotion to propel action

Once you’ve got your audience’s attention, you still need to communicate your message and make them feel the appropriate emotion to encourage them to take that all-important desired action (in line with your goal).

Working backwards from your goal to your message, it’s the job of the video ad itself to put your viewers into the right emotional state to absorb that messaging and act upon it. Basically: you’ve got to make your audience feel the right way.

Dollar Shave Club want their viewers to feel connected to this quirky company and its values, amused by the ridiculousness of the video, a little bit ashamed for paying so much for razors, and like there’s a much better option. After watching they want their audience to visit DollarShaveClub.com and find out more about the benefits of their razors.

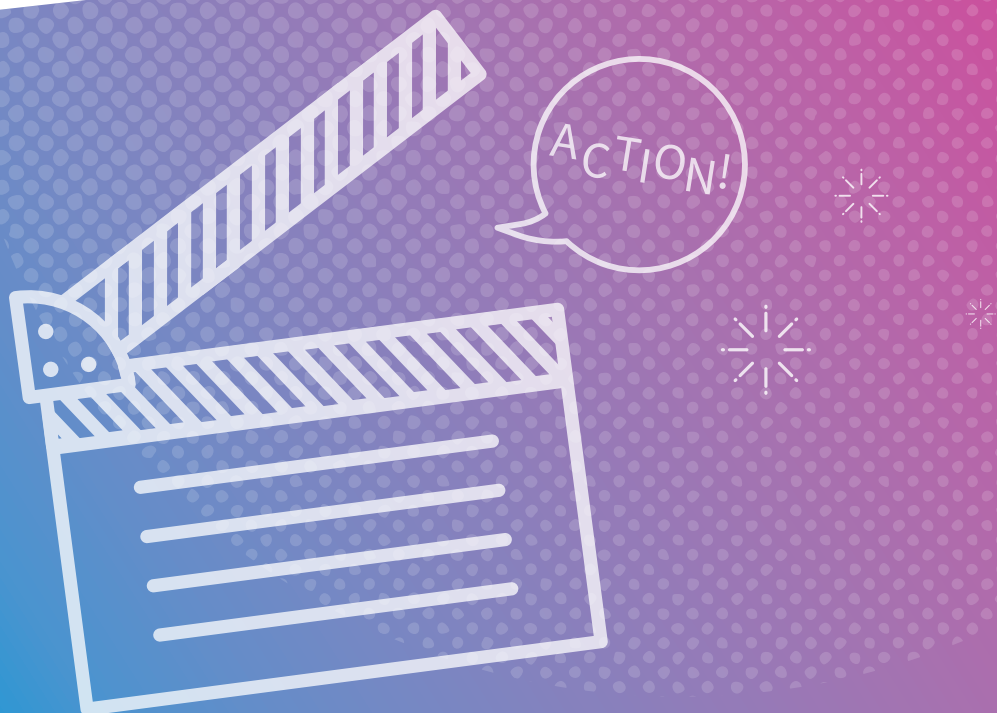


As we said in part one, it's key that you understand your target audience so you can affect them emotionally. Your ad should be something you know will appeal to and resonate with the right people.

For Dollar Shave Club, they knew their ideal market was young men between 18 and 35. To engage them they used a blend of irreverent humour and non-salesy sales talk that had already proved popular in ads from the likes of Old Spice. For your own video adverts, you should consider what your audience enjoy and which values they care about most. Use any insights you may have into them to inspire you — for example, if your target audience respect authority then you might be able to refer to an authority figure in your ad to generate feelings of trust and confidence.

Whatever points you need to make and emotions you need to generate, keep it snappy. Your ad should be short but high-impact. Don't include any more than a single core message, otherwise you'll overwhelm your audience and dilute the power of your video.





And make sure your advert ends on a clear, simple Call-to-Action. This might be a link through to your website, a sales promotion or even a hashtag. Whatever it is, make it obvious what action you want your audience to take next and easy for them to do it. Everything in your video should be engineered to improve your odds of boosting your results and meeting your goal.



Now we've covered the ins-and-outs of a great video ad, here are some of our best tips when it comes to video advertising on specific channels.

Facebook: be grabbing

On Facebook we all have notoriously short attention spans — it's so easy just to keep scrolling. You need to grab your audience within the first few moments. But once we're watching, we can spend ages engrossed in heartwarming or incredible tales, so don't be afraid to make your ad up to several minutes long if there's a genuine story to be told. Most importantly, your video ad should be understandable even on silent, because up to 85% of Facebook video is watched without sound.

-  Grab attentions within 3 seconds
-  It needs to work without sound — use subtitles
-  Try vertical or square videos
-  Tell an emotional story tailored to your audience



YouTube: be quick

YouTube TrueView in-stream ads (more on them later) are played before or during another video from a YouTube partner. Viewers see the first 5 seconds of your advert and from then on have the choice to skip anytime. Some advertisers have done really clever things with the medium, like Geico, who create “unskippable” video campaigns that end after 10 seconds but carry on awkwardly for a minute afterwards or are condensed, quite literally, into 15 seconds. Check out one of our favorites below.

- ▶ Give viewers a reason to watch in 5 seconds
- ▶ Put your most important information up-front
- ▶ Use humour, surprise or other stand-out tactics
- ▶ Consider exciting, big-impact visuals



Instagram: be beautiful

These days you can advertise on Instagram via the Facebook network, but the platform has a few key differences from its larger social sibling. First of all, Instagram is all about looks. That doesn't mean you can't say something meaningful with your video, but you need to focus on making the most gorgeous, visually appealing ads possible. They also need to be square to look best on the channel — and should incorporate obvious movement so your audience don't mistake them for images.

- 📷 Use immediate motion to distinguish from images
- 📷 It needs to work equally well without sound
- 📷 Prioritise square videos
- 📷 Visuals are key, so create beautiful ads



Google Display Network: be relevant

Video adverts on the Google Display Network are set up in AdWords just like YouTube ads, but can be displayed anywhere on a collection of sites, apps and blogs that are vetted Google video partners. Your ad will be shown within an existing video player — before, during or after the streaming video content — or as an interstitial in the case of apps. Different publishers have different rules as to the length of these ads and what types of content they allow on their platforms.

- Ⓞ Give viewers a reason to watch in 5 seconds
- Ⓞ Put your most important information up-front
- Ⓞ Tailor your ads to the sites they appear on
- Ⓞ Link to a landing page, so viewers can find out more

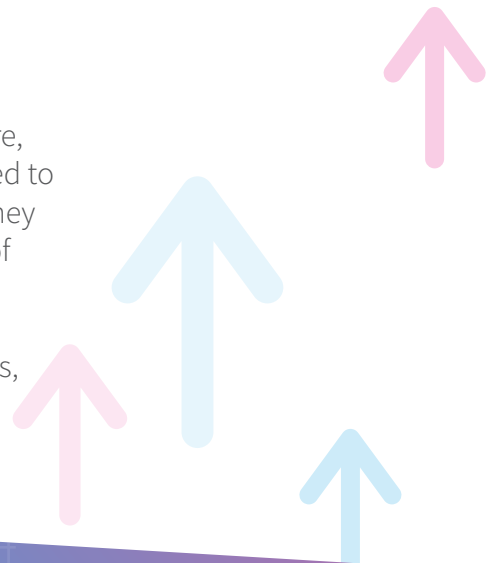


Part 3. Spread the Content

Once you've created your video content, it's time to carry out your distribution plan on your chosen channels. You need to actually set up some ads.

Running a successful online video advertising campaign requires care, dedication and attention to detail. Not only do the initial adverts need to be set up, but they must be managed and optimised for as long as they run. You should also track the right metrics to measure the success of your ads — and improve your efforts in the future.

Keep reading for some initial tips when it comes to running video ads, and then our specific advice for doing so on each of the major video advertising platforms.



The Basic Rules of Distributing Video Ads

Be as specific as possible with your targeting. In most situations you'll want to go narrow rather than broad to ensure you don't waste money and get the best results possible from the leads you really care about. Unless you're looking for pure reach, it's best to stay trained on your target audience. Targeting can be done through demographics, retargeting data, the keywords viewers are searching for and the content they're engaging with.

Always keep in mind how your adverts are impacting your wider marketing campaigns. Maintain a consistent brand presentation. If something changes in the way you're communicating with your audience, then it's time to update your ads too.

If you aren't able to create videos specifically for advertising, take your existing content and test it out with organic distribution. For example, place your video content on Facebook. Then add spend to whichever video gets the best results — this way you're only investing in your best-performing content that's already proven itself.

Never stop optimising, tweaking and learning. Don't just rely on best practices: learn what works for your specific industry, market, target audience, value proposition and product offering. Do more of what works, and less of what doesn't.

Advertising on YouTube & Google Display Network

Both these types of video advertising are run through Google AdWords. No matter where you choose to display your video ad, if you advertise with Google you'll be using TrueView.

TrueView is a system whereby you only pay when a viewer watches or interacts with your ad. In practice, that means they must either watch for longer than 30 seconds or click on the advert itself

The idea is that viewers have choice, and you only spend money on an audience that are actually interested in what you have to say. There are no limits on how long or short your ad must be (although Google recommends 12 seconds at a minimum), so you also have more flexibility to experiment with formats, stories and approaches.







There are two types of TrueView video adverts you can choose from:

In-stream ads: these play before or during a video on from a YouTube partner. This can either be on YouTube itself or on a site within the Google Display Network. Viewers are able to skip after 5 seconds if they don't want to see any more. You get charged whenever someone watches for at least 30 seconds or to the end of the video (whichever is shorter) or clicks on an interactive element in the ad. You're able to add Call-to-Action overlays, cards and companion banners to your advert.

Discovery ads: previously known as in-display ads, these can appear on the YouTube homepage, within search results on the platform, in the sidebar when watching a video, and on websites in the Google Display Network. You'll be given a thumbnail and up to three lines of text to play with, and will be charged when someone decides to watch your video by clicking on the advert. After clicking viewers will be redirected to the YouTube URL of your video hosted on the platform.






Whichever type of TrueView ad you decide on, you'll have several targeting options available to help you reach your audience most effectively. In a nutshell these are:

-  Demographics like age, gender, parental status, income (only in the US, Japan, Australia and New Zealand) and location
-  Interests of viewers like beauty, sport or travel, which Google call "affinity audiences"
-  Remarketing to those who have engaged with your brand already (and if you wish, similar audiences)
-  Topics of the content you want your advert to be shown alongside, like news, animals or science
-  Keywords you want your advert to be shown for when searched, such as "how to make a cappuccino"
-  Specific websites, apps, and/or YouTube channels and videos where you want your ad to be shown

You're able to set a budget for each AdWords video advertising campaign (daily or over a certain period of time) as well as the maximum cost per view (CPV) you're willing to pay.

We recommend tracking the following metrics for your Google video ads:

-  View rate, or the number of views or engagements your ad receives divided by the number of times it's shown
-  Click-through rate (CTR), or the number of clicks your ad receives divided by the number of times it's shown
-  Video viewership, or the percentage of viewers that reached 25%, 50%, 75% and 100% of the way through the ad

These three will give you some solid insights into how your ads are performing and how engaging your audience find them. Beyond this, you'll also need to keep an eye on whichever metrics you identified as important when setting up your video advertising goals.

Final Tips for Video Ads on YouTube & Google Display Network

Create strong Calls-to-Action to make it clear which action your audience should take next. Try out all the functionality available to you and see what viewers respond to most.

Keyword targeting with discovery ads can be a very powerful way to reach those in your target audience looking for answers to their questions. Just be sure to research and test your keywords thoroughly before putting lots of spend behind them.

Deciding on your CPV — effectively how much you'll be bidding for your views — is hard. If you're not getting as many views as you expected, or you're struggling to use up your budget, you can try upping your CPV. Ideally you want to reach a sweet spot where you're getting the maximum quality views possible for your spend. If you have to increase your CPV over time just to get the same number of views it can mean your ad has been running so long that viewers are getting fatigued, or that there's more competition for the audience you're targeting. Track your CPVs and tweak them as and when needed.

Advertising on Facebook & Instagram

Video ads on these social platforms are run through the same system, namely the Facebook Adverts Manager. When you set up your ads you'll be able to specify whether you want to show them on Facebook, Instagram or both.

Before you can set up video adverts on Facebook Adverts Manager, you'll be asked to choose the marketing objective of your campaign from options like brand awareness, traffic, engagement, lead generation, conversions and even specifically video views. When you pay depends on which objective you choose. The most common form of ad payment is per impression (or whenever your video is shown). A few objectives will allow you to pay whenever you reach certain goals, such as link clicks or 10-second view views.

You're given a fair amount of freedom when setting up video ads on Facebook and Instagram, although there are maximum video lengths on both platforms and you're encouraged to upload vertical or square videos.

Here are the two major types of video adverts you can run with Facebook Adverts Manager:

Standard placement ads: these play automatically without sound when users are browsing Facebook or Instagram. You can specify exactly where they will be seen: in Facebook feeds, instant articles, and suggested videos, or in Instagram feeds and stories. These adverts can be up to 240 minutes on Facebook but only a maximum of 60 seconds on Instagram.

In-stream ads: these unskippable mid-roll adverts are shown during videos from "familiar publishers and digital-first creators" according to strict requirements and on Facebook only. They must be between 5 and 15 seconds in length. Because the targeting for these ads is audience-based, viewers of the same video might see different adverts depending on their interests.

For advertising on both Facebook and Instagram, you'll have the following targeting options available to you so you can successfully get through to your desired audience:



Basic demographic information like age, gender and location



More advanced demographics that rely on the information people share with these social channels, such as education, finances, parental status, relationship status, and employment status



Interests of users like fitness, technology or arts (based on their activities)



Complex behaviours of users like what kind of mobile phone they use, whether they donate to charity and how recently they went on holiday



Users who have liked certain pages, apps or events



Remarketing to those who have engaged with your brand already (and if you wish, lookalike audiences)

You'll be able to set a budget for your Facebook Adverts Manager campaigns, either daily or over a certain period of time. Your bid strategy is chosen automatically based on your campaign objective — generally it's set to get you the best results for the lowest cost — but you're able to set a bid cap if you wish.

We recommend tracking the following metrics for your Facebook and Instagram video ads:



Video average watch time, or the average number of seconds your video was watched



Video percentage watched, or the average percentage of your video that users watched



Post reactions, comments, and shares for a snapshot of engagement



Click-through rate (CTR), or the percentage of times people saw your ad and clicked on any link within it

These basic metrics will provide the foundation for you to understand how well your ads are encouraging your audience to watch, engage and react. Also make sure to track those metrics you set out as measures of success for your advertising campaigns.

Final Tips for Video Ads on Facebook & Instagram

Take full advantage of all the data Facebook has about your audience. Make sure you use insights wherever possible to engage closely with your ideal buyers, and don't be afraid to test out lookalike audiences to expand your reach.

It always pays to stick to a clear target audience, but on social channels engagement is everything and your ad might never get off the ground if it doesn't receive enough attention from a large enough audience segment. Test out the frequency, spread and budget of your adverts to generate optimal engagement.

Most of the objectives available in Facebook Adverts Manager allow you to create video ads, but the "video views" objective in particular will make Facebook look specifically for those more likely to engage with your content. The more your video is watched and enjoyed, the greater chance you have to achieve your goal, whether that's driving traffic to your site or boosting conversions. Consider using this objective to allow Facebook to generate you a custom audience that's tailor-made to appreciate your videos.

Summary

Video advertising doesn't have to be difficult, but you need to start by getting the basics right: what you're aiming to achieve, what your audience care about, what you want to say, and how and where you can communicate it to them best.

By investing in video ad campaigns you're investing in a better connection with your potential customers. Take every opportunity you can to engage them with meaningful video content, delivered where they already spend their time online, and you'll reap the benefits all along the marketing funnel.

Discover how we helped elevate Nottingham to the world with a Facebook and YouTube video advertising campaign



[Read our Nottingham in Parliament Day case study](#)

