12.14: Getting your ads online

To get your ads to appear online, you need to find and pay for the space where they will appear. There are several options for doing this:

- Premium booked media
- Advertising networks
- Advertising exchanges and programmatic buying
- Social media advertising placement (see more in the Social media advertising chapter)
- Native advertising
- Mobile advertising
- Ad servers.

Premium booked media

Premium booked media works very much in the traditional way of booking advertising; the advertiser contacts the premium media provider (usually a single group that oversees a key, high-profile online space) and discusses options for placing an advert. This will involve negotiating on targeting and pricing for the space desired, and is usually a costly but high-profile option.

Advertising networks

An advertising network is a group of websites on which adverts can be purchased through a single sales entity. It could be a collection of sites owned by the same publisher, for example, New Line Cinema, Time Inc. and HBO are all owned by Time Warner Inc., or it could be an affiliation of sites that share a representative.

The Google Display Network is one of the largest advertising networks in the world.

Figure 12.14.1: Ad formats available on the Google Display Network (not including rich media ads) *Adapted From Blu Mint Digital, 2017*

The advertising network acts as an intermediary between advertisers and publishers, and provides a technology solution to both. As well as providing a centralised ad server that can serve adverts to a number of websites, the networks offer tracking and reporting, as well as targeting.

Advertising networks can categorise the sites by factors such as demographics, topic, or area of interest. Audience targeting is a particularly useful option, in which an ad can be targeted according to remarketing lists, custom lists, or interest categories. Advertisers pay to advertise in specific channels, and not in individual sites. Usually, the campaign will then be optimised based on the best converting sites or on the objectives of the campaign. Rates are often negotiated with the network, and placements are booked over a period of time.

Advertising exchanges and programmatic buying

Advertising exchanges, on the other hand, are where unsold advertising space, called inventory is placed by publishers for bidding. The inventory is sold to the highest bidding advertiser. Giving advertisers far more control, this type of advertising mimics the PPC model of search advertising (GSP auction) but bids are for audience profiles and space rather than for keywords. It allows publishers to fill unsold inventory at the highest available price, and can give smaller advertisers access to this inventory.

Programmatic buying is the automated purchasing of digital advertising space using software. This is much more efficient than the old process of human ad buyers and salespeople, and thus it is also cheaper. Programmatic buying can happen in advance from specific publisher sites, or in real time bidding. Real time bidding is one kind of programmatic ad buying in which ads are bought on a per-impression basis through real time instantaneous auctions.

Programmatic is exciting because it makes targeting much easier. It uses small predictive analysis to present your ads to the most likely optimal target market, and then evolves from there based on what is working best. This frees marketers up to focus on KPIs, creative, strategy, and other aspects.

Social media advertising

> **Note**
>
> Read more about this in the Social media advertising chapter.

Many social media platforms offer an advertising option, as this is their primary source of revenue. Social media can be an excellent place to reach prospects because you can usually target very accurately based on user-provided demographic information.

Native advertising

Native advertising is presenting advertising in a way that matches the platform on which it is presented and that meets audience expectations for that platform. It is an indirect promotion of the brand or product in that it is primarily focused on providing value to a specific readership, but it differs from content marketing in that it is paid. Essentially, it is paid advertising that works very hard not to disrupt the user experience. In its ideal form, this means the user is presented with useful, engaging content, which in turn is much more engaging than a banner ad.

It can look like paid search ads on a search engine, sponsored content like on LinkedIn or Facebook, or promoted listings, like on Twitter. However, it looks much more like content than advertising.

Mobile advertising

Mobile advertising is no longer something that should be considered in isolation. While there are still mobile-online networks, online advertising is moving toward real time buying and networks, and so device is becoming just another targeting option. All of the ad options already discussed are also available on mobile.

Blind networks

These networks target a large number of independent mobile publishers, and generally allow you to target by country or type of content, but not by specific websites. Payment tends to be on a CPC basis, which can vary. An example of this kind of network is mob ads (www.mobads.com). Very few low-cost blind networks exist these days, as they have all been bought up by programmatic engines.

Premium blind networks

Advertising on premium blind networks tends to be more expensive but allow the advertiser to target better-known brands and high-traffic sites. Broadcasters or operator portals fall under this category. Payment here is often on a CPM basis. Millennial Media (www.millennialmedia.com) is an example premium blind network. While targeting options are available, different networks can work in different ways, with varying levels of support.

Premium networks

These networks often offer sales as a direct extension of the big brands that they offer. More detailed targeting and sales support is available, but they also charge higher rates. They also offer different ad bidding options such as CPC and CPView for video ads. An example of this kind of network is Widespace (www.widespace.com).

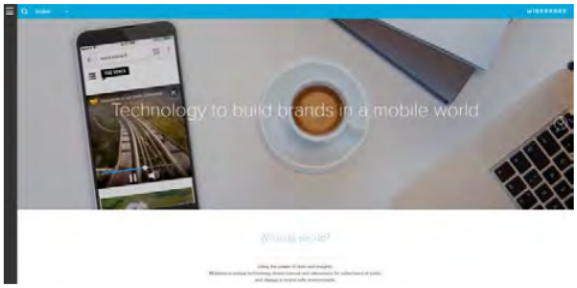

Figure 12.14.2: Widespace is an example of a premium mobile ad network *Adapted From Screenshot, Widespace, 2017*

Gaming console advertising

> **Note**
>
> The IAB has some guidelines for responsive creative that you can find at https://www.iab.com/ newadportfolio/

Of course, a phone isn't the only kind of mobile device. Internet-connected game consoles are also classified as mobile devices, and they also allow for advertising. Consoles like the Xbox One can replace a cable box, DVD player, stereo, and older gaming consoles, so users of all ages and demographics could find them appealing.

Ad servers

Ad servers are servers that store advertisements and serve them to web pages. Ad servers can be local, run by a publisher to serve adverts to websites on the publisher's domain, or they can be third-party ad servers, which serve adverts to web pages on any domain. Ad servers facilitate advert trafficking and provide reports on advert performance. They have two functions: to help publishers manage their ad inventory, and to help advertisers monitor and optimise their campaigns.

The benefits of ad servers

Rather than distribute copies of each piece of creative advertising to each publisher or media buyer, you can send out a line of code that calls up an advertisement directly from the ad server each time an advert is scheduled to run. The agency loads the creative to the server once and can modify rotations or add new units on the fly without needing to re-contact the vendors. This is referred to as third-party ad serving.

The ad servers provide a wealth of data, including impressions served, adverts clicked, CTR and CPC. While publishers have their own ad servers, most of the third-party ad servers also have the ability to provide performance against postclick activities such as sales, leads, downloads, or any other site-based action the advertiser may want to measure.

Ad servers provide a consistent counting methodology across the entire campaign enabling the advertiser to gain an 'apples to apples' comparison of performance across the entire media schedule, which includes multiple websites. This ensures that the advertiser gets what they are paying for, and avoids fraudulent activities, such as click fraud, as a good third-party ad server should be audited.

The ad server also allows sophisticated targeting of display advertising. Examples of third-party ad servers include Google DoubleClick and Sizmek. It is generally accepted practice to run one of these ad servers, but they all cost a percentage of the CPM rates.

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