

Ad operations best practices

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A guide to providing your clients with the best service and campaign delivery

The world of online advertising is evolving into a massive online community where advertisers and publishers interact on a daily basis. It is common to cooperate with a variety of external services when working with display advertising to ensure that your display adverts are built and displayed properly.

First, let's have a peek at the evolution of the online advertising industry.

How did online advertising begin?

Online advertising began in the early 1990s as page owners sought additional revenue streams to support their content. Commercial online service Prodigy displayed banners at the bottom of the screen to promote Sears products. The first clickable web ad was sold by Global Network Navigator in 1993 to a Silicon Valley law firm. In 1994, web banner advertising became mainstream when HotWired, the online component of Wired Magazine, sold banner ads to AT&T and other companies. The first AT&T ad on HotWired had a 44% click-through rate, and instead of directing clickers to AT&T's website, the ad linked to an online tour of seven of the world's most acclaimed art museums.

In 2011, internet advertising revenues in the United States surpassed those of cable television and nearly exceeded those of broadcast television. In 2013, internet advertising revenues in the United States totalled \$42.8bn, a 17% increase over the \$36.57bn in revenues in 2012. U.S. internet ad revenue hit a historic high of \$20.1bn for the first half of 2013, up 18% over the same period in 2012. Online advertising is widely used across virtually all industry sectors.

What are the different types of delivery methods and how do I execute a campaign effectively?

There are many different types of delivery methods available in online advertising namely; email marketing, display ads, search engine marketing (SEM), social media marketing, mobile advertising and affiliate marketing to name a few.

In this article I am going to focus on best practices within ad operations that can be followed using all advertising platforms. This serves as a common ground for publishers to ensure that their clients receive maximum revenue as well as extraordinary service.

What is the importance of an ad operations team?

The role of the ad operations team acts as the "Engine Room" for executing campaigns effortlessly as it is rapidly evolving in terms of delivery of campaigns resulting in the end goal being revenue. Ad Operations is not just about trafficking advertising campaigns; it's about customer service and execution. In order for this to work, every ad ops team needs to be a "well-oiled engine", fully grasping clients' needs and understanding the desired end result. This is where analysing data in trends and reports come in as well as knowing how to optimize a campaign.

General best practices

[The Internet Advertising Bureau](#) has developed a range of [advertising best practices](#). Even though these are simply guidelines, others should always be followed and implemented by advertising networks and other publishing platforms.

Campaign management is a series of marketing tactics and programs that are all designed to achieve a specific business

goal (increase revenue, leads, conversions, etc.)

Campaign preparation and building:

- **Define the goals** you want to achieve in order for your campaign to deliver. What is the end result your client desires? Communicate thoroughly with the sales team to determine the client's objectives. Once you know this, you are on your way to building an effective campaign.
- Make sure you follow **a standard workflow** when creating a campaign. This includes easy and consistent **naming conventions** – This should be the same for all campaigns (unless specified otherwise by the client) so that your campaigns remain neat and easy to find when you are looking at an over-view of all campaigns in the ad server.
- **Know your client's rules:** This is a fairly important point as many publishers have a set of rules that they expect to be followed. This ranges from the types of ad's that are displayed on their website, using specific templates to serve banners, targeting, and more repetitive rules that apply for all of their campaigns. Make sure you know each client's workflow and expectations – create a document so that you don't get different client rules mixed up.
- **Define who you want to target:** If there is no targeting criteria specified in the insertion order that is received from the client, your campaign can basically show to anyone who visits the site. To avoid this, make sure you include specific targeting criteria if required such as geo-targeting (specified countries/cities), audience segments, device targeting and key value targeting. By specifying these criteria the campaign will have more chance in serving its purpose.
- **Be vigilant and precise:** If you are a campaign manager you will know how easy it is to miss one small detail. It is extremely important to make sure that all information that is put into the ad server is correct and that all your boxes are ticked. Again, make a workflow document for each client in order to ensure a close to perfect campaign set up with minimum errors.

Campaign execution:

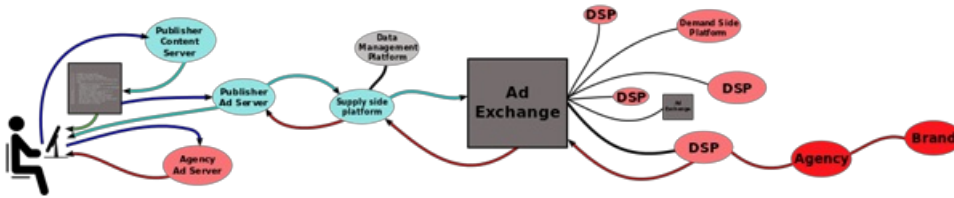
- **QA (Quality Assurance)** is an extremely important step before a campaign goes live. This should not be done by you, but rather another campaign manager. This ensures that the campaign has been built correctly, and all relevant information has been included such as ad units, correct websites, impression goals, frequency caps, special targeting criteria and that the banners have been uploaded correctly.
- **Confirmation and implementation** of the campaign should only be done once QA has been completed. This is a best practice to follow to avoid any hiccups and incorrect campaigns to go live, avoiding an angry client.

Campaign management:

- **Monitoring your campaign** should be done throughout the lifetime of a campaign. This best practice is important because you need to make absolutely sure that your campaign is on track to deliver by the end of its lifetime.
- **Optimisation:** This important practice is usually performed after monitoring and analysing different ways the campaign needs to be optimised in order to reach its goal. Before optimising your campaign, you should always get the clients approval for any changes you'd like to make. Making changes without approval is not a best practice because if anything goes wrong with the delivery, the responsibility falls on you and more so it could hurt the reputation of the company you work for.

- **Analysis and reporting:** One way to analyse your campaign is to run a detailed report. This means that you will need to understand what you are looking for and understand which metrics and dimensions are required in order to read the performance of your campaign.

Reports show us in depth insights and trends from which day of the week the campaign peaked to how the user interacted with the campaign based on the click through rate. You should always make a conclusion on a campaign once you have analysed the report so that you can give well informed feedback to your client.



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ABOUT CINDY MARITZ

I've been in digital since 2014 and I love it! Ad Operations is my forte. What gets me excited is the ever evolving technology and the opportunity to learn more about this industry, even outside of my role as a Campaign Manager, on a daily basis. There is room for learning if you just have the right attitude.
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