Answers to common questions about YouTube Ads

I never hide my love of YouTube ads. It’s my favorite channel to use to run paid campaigns because it’s a cost-effective way to build brand awareness and also drive user action. Whether I’m pitching the channel to a client or already running campaigns, I seem to come across the same set of questions about YouTube ads. I wanted to use this post to address the questions I typically see to help you easily answer the same questions you may receive in the future.

Do you really get free advertising from YouTube?

Short answer: Yes, you can, but it is not exactly the way you think. Google doesn’t hand over vouchers for free ad spend every month. What we do get is the opportunity for free brand awareness. Advertisers running video campaigns in Google Ads only have to pay when users watch a good portion of your ad.

Advertisers only have to pay for views if either a user watches your TrueView ad for thirty seconds, or if they watch the entire video of an ad that is less than thirty seconds. So if you have a thirty-second ad, and users only watch twenty-eight seconds of the ad every time, you will never pay for those views. Now name any other marketing channel that will offer you free, consistent branding like YouTube can. Exactly.

Since advertisers can choose to add additional components to their videos such as the new call-to-action extension or shopping cards, they still could get charged for views under thirty seconds. If users watching your ads, interact with your additional elements, you will be charged for those clicks. You just have to understand you will be charged for which ever

action happens first: the thirty-second video view or the physical click engagement.

Video ads aren’t counting towards my total views. Why?

Let’s set up the scenario a little bit. You may see a video you are using as a video ad have a certain view count within Google Ads like we can see in this image.

But when you check your video analytics within the YouTube Studio, you may see a totally different view count even though your date ranges are exactly the same.

Why do the 649 views versus 222 views happen? The answer is pretty simple. If you are running in-stream ads, there are a few policies you should be aware of. First, if you choose to run skippable ads, the video has to be at least twelve seconds long to count towards incremental views. If you are running non-skippable ads, like the fifteen-second maximum or six-second bumper ads, those views are never counted towards your overall view total. Keep this in mind if you ever have a client wanting to run a campaign with the goal of “boosting views.” People will see the video, but the true totals may not be public.

I selected specific placements for my ad group targeting. Why aren’t they getting any impressions?

The biggest reason I was mad about the Display Planner going away last year wasn’t the impact it had on my Display Network campaigns. I was mad about the effect it was going to have on my video campaigns. When looking for website placements for video ads over a year ago, we used to be able to see which placements had space for video ads.

Those days are long gone. Now advertisers have to research placements while creating their ad groups. And while we can

still get a list of every website on the Display Network, there is no guarantee those websites have video ad space. This is exactly how your video ad may never show up on the specific website placements you chose. Here’s something else to make placement targeting more difficult to perfect.

Yep. You’re not seeing things. Just because you pick certain placements, doesn’t mean Google has to show your ad on those exact placements. Depending on what other targeting options you have layered into your ad groups, or for whatever reason you are not eligible to show up on the placements you selected, your video ad could show up on other channels, videos, or website placements you never manually selected. So whenever you launch a new video ad campaign with managed

placements, watch them very carefully right away to see where your video ads are actually being shown.

Why isn’t Google letting me change my bidding method for my video campaigns?

In your Search Network campaigns, you can change your campaign goal in the Settings as often as you want. With video campaigns, that is not an option. Once you pick a campaign goal for a video campaign, you are stuck with it.

This is an important warning to remember, for advertisers who

love to test different bid strategies. But also important if you want to run a specific campaign like TrueView for Action or TrueView for Shopping. These campaign examples (and some others) require you to select specific campaign goals and subtypes to create them. Your hands may be tied to certain bid strategies in addition to the lack of freedom to be able to change the campaign goals down the road (for now as we know it). I recently wrote a post laying out all of the bidding options for YouTube campaigns so you can get an understanding of all of your choices.

Dig in and get familiar with video campaigns

The more you know about the ins and outs of a video campaign in Google Ads, the more likely you'll see better results. With the ability to get free brand awareness 24/7, there is no excuse for any advertiser to avoid testing out a video campaign. Find out what your audience likes to engage with and use the answers from this post to better help you structure your campaigns, measure performance and get in front of the right audience.

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About The Author

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