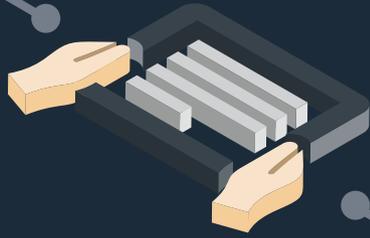


A Metia Report

# The B2B marketer's quick guide to social media advertising



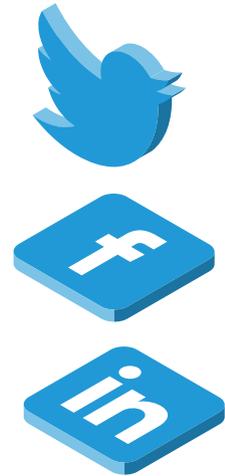
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# Introduction



Global spending on social media advertising is forecast to reach \$29.9bn in 2016<sup>1</sup>. And it's rising fast, predicted to grow a further 20% in 2017 – reaching \$36bn and representing 16% of all digital ad spending.



forecast to reach  
**\$29.9bn**  
in 2016



growth predicted  
in 2017

That figure equates to \$13.87 per social media user worldwide, with advertisers spending an average of \$61.35 to reach North Americans, and \$25.26 to reach Western Europeans.

Despite this growth, some B2B marketers remain doubtful of its effectiveness – convinced that social media advertising can only offer value in the world of B2C marketing. This guide is intended to break down that stereotype, to convey why social media advertising has become an integral part of the B2B marketing mix, and explain how B2B businesses can harness it to add value to their bottom line.

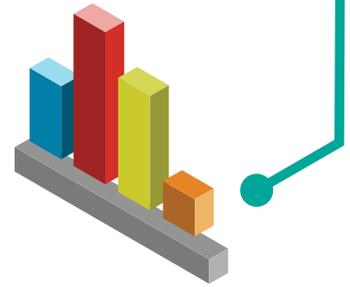
The guide also shares best practice tips gathered by the social media advertising team at Metia Group, and offers insight from our Performance Benchmarking Index – a data collection benchmarking tool through which we track, measure and optimize all of our social media advertising campaigns. You'll learn what represents a good return from the main social networks, and what trends and pitfalls you need to be aware of before you start a campaign. And for those ready to get stuck in, we provide a practical six step guide to ensure your social media advertising campaigns drive measurable value for your business.

## **Peter Morgan**

Director, Demand Generation  
Metia Group

<sup>1</sup>Source: eMarketer <http://www.emarketer.com/Article/Social-Network-Ad-Spending-Hit-2368-Billion-Worldwide-2015/1012357>

# Why social media advertising is essential for B2B marketers



Global spending on social media advertising has increased almost threefold between 2013 and 2016 <sup>2</sup>. Here are five reasons for this rapid growth.

## Unprecedented access to markets

Social networks offer unparalleled access to global audiences, thanks to their pervasiveness and the data they collect. Facebook has 1.65 billion monthly active users <sup>3</sup>. That's nearly one in four people on the planet over the age of 13. And for each of those users, Facebook understands their interests and behaviour. It's a similar picture on Twitter and LinkedIn, albeit with fewer users.

So marketers can understand and target their audiences more precisely than ever before. There has never been an easier way to reach so many customers.



<sup>2</sup> Source: eMarketer <http://www.emarketer.com/Article/Social-Network-Ad-Spending-Hit-2368-Billion-Worldwide-2015/1012357>

<sup>3</sup> Source: Facebook <http://newsroom.fb.com/company-info/>

## Competition for attention

Social networks have made content marketers of all of us – and there’s only so much space in our feeds. The competition for space is fierce.

The result? A decline in organic reach across all of the major social networks. It’s getting harder for brands to reach audiences organically. That trend is only set to continue.



1,500

stories that could appear in a person’s News Feed each time they log on to facebook

“On average, there are 1,500 stories that could appear in a person’s News Feed each time they log onto Facebook.

Competition in News Feed is increasing, and it’s becoming harder for any story to gain exposure in News Feed.”

**Brian Boland, VP Advertising Technology, Facebook** <sup>4</sup>

## Social networking monetisation

As social networks have focused their business models on advertising, it’s become clear that the social audiences grown by brands aren’t owned: they’re rented.

Access to these audiences isn’t free, even if you’ve grown them organically: you have to pay to play.



Social networks are now  
‘pay-to-play’

Marketers have been complaining for some time that... brands have to pay for adverts if they want to engage with their target audience [on social media].

These rumblings have been growing louder over the past 12 months, particularly in regards to Facebook... however, it could be that Twitter will also become a so-called ‘pay-to-play’ network for marketers, as it [moves to] a news feed-style algorithm.

**David Moth, The Guardian** <sup>5</sup>

<sup>4</sup>Source: Facebook <https://www.facebook.com/business/news/Organic-Reach-on-Facebook>

<sup>5</sup>Source: The Guardian <https://www.theguardian.com/media/2014/sep/15/pay-to-play-the-end-of-free-social-media-marketing>

## Increasing investments in content

Recent Content Marketing Institute research found that 28% of B2B marketing spend goes to content marketing, with more than half of survey respondents expecting to increase their investment in 2016.<sup>6</sup>

As a marketer, it's important to remember that content marketing is only as strong as its weakest link. You may be creating great content, but if you're not investing in its promotion then its impact will be limited.



of B2B marketing spend goes to content marketing

## Advances in analytics

Advances in technology have made end-to-end digital tracking straight forward: from first impression of content on social media through to an outcome that impacts revenue – for example a sale or renewal.

By linking your demand generation activity to your digital destinations and CRM, you can easily understand the impact different tactics have on your bottom line.

This has lowered barriers to entry for social media advertising. Marketers can now test multiple channels, using the data to guide which activity to invest in, and which to stop. And they can do in near real-time.

“The quickest way to kill your content marketing is to do nothing after you create your content.

Creating content is only part of content marketing. The other half is promoting it. I saw this as a problem a long time ago, when I gave this advice to businesses: Don't forget the 'marketing' in content marketing.”

Neil Patel, Kissmetrics <sup>7</sup>

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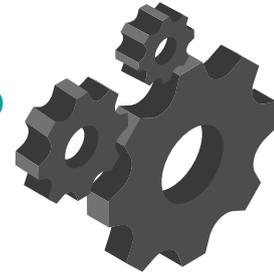
With earned media traditionally the hardest to generate, and owned media generally the most expensive to create and sustain, paid media present a unique opportunity to B2B marketers: an affordable and practical way to drive measurable returns for their business.

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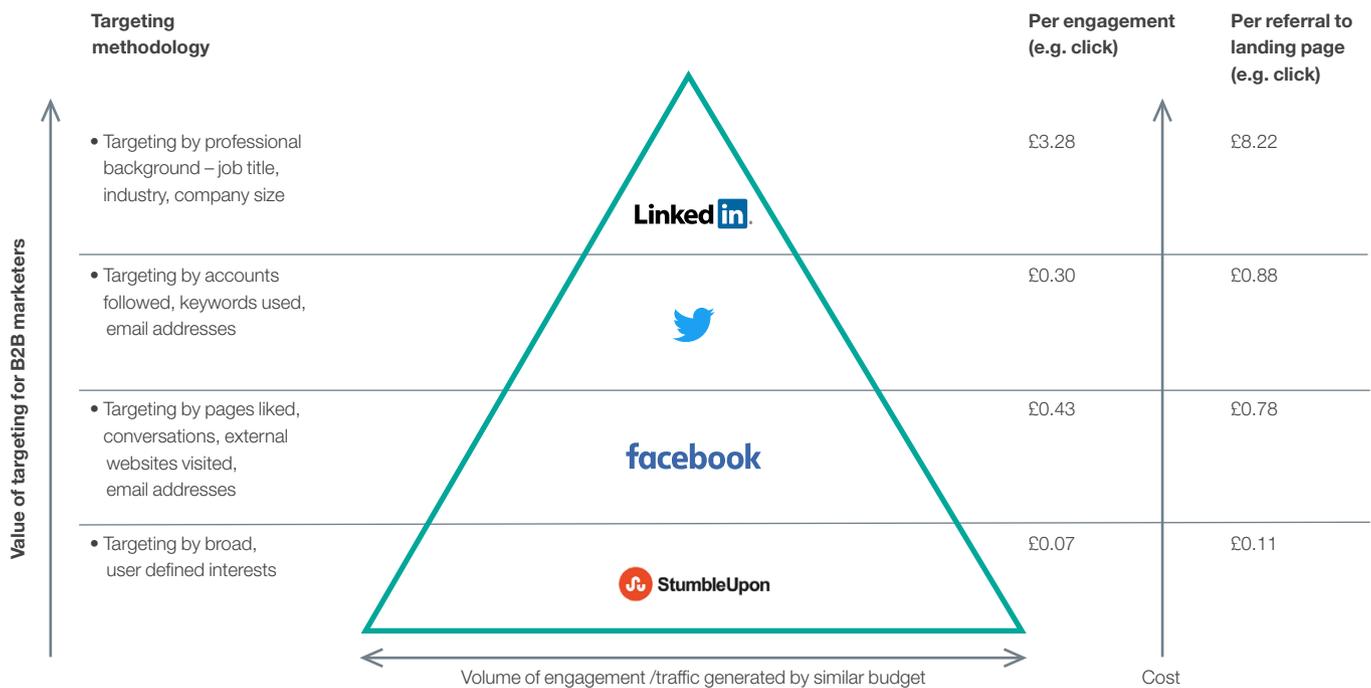
<sup>6</sup>Source: Content Marketing Institute <http://contentmarketinginstitute.com/2015/09/b2b-content-marketing-research/>

<sup>7</sup>Source: Kissmetrics <https://blog.kissmetrics.com/content-isnt-working-for-you/>

# The key B2B channels and their benefits



It's essential you choose the right social networks given your campaign's audience and objectives. Let's look in detail at four of the most valuable channels for B2B channels: LinkedIn, Facebook, Twitter, and StumbleUpon.



<sup>8</sup>Source: Metia Performance Benchmarking Index, September 2016, UK Data.



### **433 million members worldwide**<sup>9</sup>

LinkedIn is an obvious choice for B2B marketers thanks to its business focus, and its advertising engine provides a number of ways through which to target an audience based on professional criteria (for example through a user's role, industry, or skill set). Such targeting makes it an effective B2B advertising channel, but it's also one of the more expensive. While £3–4 per click represents good value for lead generation campaigns, it may prove too costly for marketers looking to generate large-scale awareness.



### **1.65 billion monthly active users worldwide**<sup>10</sup>

While Facebook may not immediately stand out as a channel for B2B marketing, it's important to remember just how ubiquitous it has become – with nearly 1 in 4 adults worldwide being active users. Well delivered B2B campaigns can still deliver value – especially those that are creatively rich and sympathetic to Facebook's more informal tone. Approaches to consider include in-stream video, or Facebook's immersive new Canvas ads. Facebook's audience targeting has recently improved, from a B2B perspective, with the ability to target users by their job title or industry.



### **310 million monthly active users worldwide**<sup>11</sup>

Twitter is significantly cheaper than LinkedIn but can be equally valuable in B2B marketing. While not primarily a business channel, Twitter is still full of business people and content – spanning the majority of industries and regions. Using Twitter marketers can target users by the accounts they follow or the keywords they use. Consequently, it's usually straightforward to identify your target audience.



### **35 million registered users worldwide**<sup>12</sup>

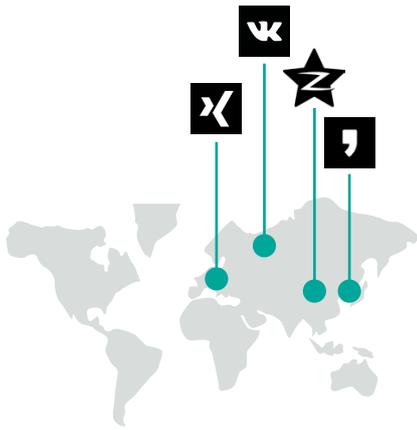
If LinkedIn represents the highest value channel, content discovery engines like StumbleUpon represent the highest volume. StumbleUpon recommends web content to users based on interests they define manually, and while this type of targeting won't work for every campaign, it is possible to segment and target broad B2B audiences – particularly those interested in technology. The real strength of StumbleUpon is the price: you can acquire relevant web traffic at a low cost per visit, meaning substantial volumes of traffic can be acquired with a modest budget.

<sup>9</sup>Source: LinkedIn <https://press.linkedin.com/about-linkedin>

<sup>10</sup>Source: Facebook <http://newsroom.fb.com/company-info/>

<sup>11</sup>Source: Twitter <https://about.twitter.com/company>

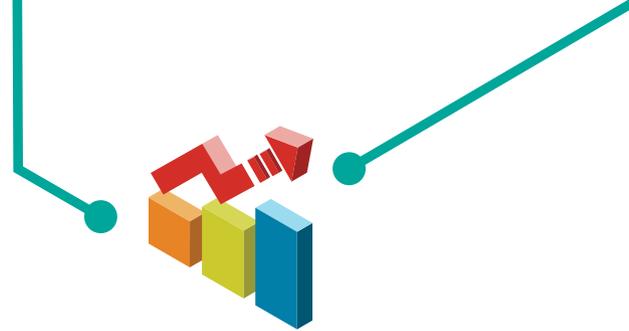
<sup>12</sup>Source: StumbleUpon: <https://www.linkedin.com/pulse/20141209145524-61956532-how-stumbleupon-ceo-catapulted-it-to-over-35-million-users>



## Other channels

While the channels we've focused on so far have global reach, it's important to understand how usage differs in local markets. For example, the leading professional network in German-speaking countries is XING, not LinkedIn. And with Facebook and Twitter still banned in mainland China, Qzone is the leading Chinese social network by membership. While we won't go into details of local channels here, it's essential to understand the nuances of your audience when planning your campaign. Don't assume your campaign will work across every region – take the time to understand where your audience are active, and how they consume content, before you start.

It would also be unwise to ignore the emergence of Instagram and Snapchat. While these will be tempting for B2B marketers to explore, it's important to focus budget and resources on the channels that will deliver value based on your audience and goals. If your audience and message is strictly B2B, will Instagram or Snapchat drive the results you need? How will you be able to monitor performance or results on private social platforms? While exploring and evaluating is good, a knee jerk response to be active in every social media platform dilutes efforts. Don't invest in new channels blindly – apply due diligence and ensure you have a comprehensive strategy in place that will deliver value for your business.



# The inside track: four trends you need to know about

Social networks are constantly evolving, and this extends to each network's advertising products. Here are four current trends to bear in mind when planning your campaigns.

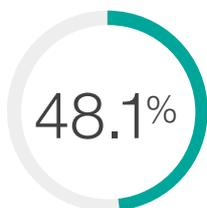
## 1. The cost of user drop-off.

From our experience between a third and a half of link clicks for social media ads never make it to their intended destination (see average figures from our Performance Benchmarking Index below). This drop-off can occur for several reasons. Users may have closed their browser window before the destination loaded, having not realised the ad they clicked would take them to an external web page. Or maybe they clicked an ad on their commute and a slow connection

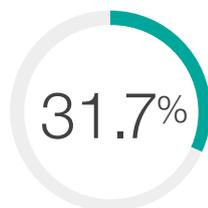
froze their browser. Unfortunately, there's no way for advertisers to know for certain as users that drop-off disappear into the gap between a social network's tracking and the advertisers website analytics.

Why is this important? Because, if you're bidding for link clicks, social networks will charge you for each click they generate – no matter how many users actually land on your site.

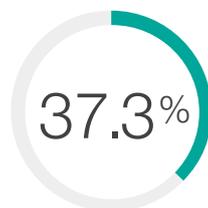
LinkedIn



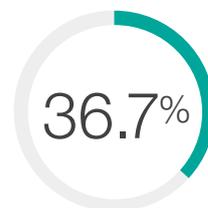
Twitter



Facebook



StumbleUpon



<sup>13</sup> Source: Metia Performance Benchmarking Index, September 2016, UK Data

So it's important to understand the likely impact of drop-off on your project before you start, and to mitigate against the risks – for example by ensuring your audience targeting is highly focused, and by being as explicit as possible in your content and offer. Your goal is to ensure you generate clicks from within your audience sweet-spot, from people who are genuinely interested in your content, and more likely to follow through on their click.

In response to user drop-off, most social networks are developing advertising mediums that keep users on site – and don't require a click to an external web page. Facebook Canvas is one attempt at this, allowing brands to tell their stories through videos and images from within network itself – reducing the need for users to leave the Facebook website or app. Expect similar functionality to launch across the other major networks.

## 2. The rise and rise of video

Video is an unstoppable force on social media, as demonstrated by Facebook video views doubling from 4 to 8 billion per day in just seven months between April and November 2015<sup>14</sup>. It's no surprise, therefore that both Twitter and Facebook are placing video at the core of their offerings, and that also extends to their advertising capability. Video has revolutionised social media advertising, with content delivered in-stream and optimised for each user's connection. The data provided to advertisers is excellent – with metrics that quantify how long viewers watched. No wonder digital video ad-spending is forecast to reach \$9.84bn in 2016<sup>15</sup>

## 3. Tailored content

Social media content should be optimised for every channel – not just in tone but also in format. The growth of Snapchat – on which all content is viewed with the phone in portrait, or vertical, mode – has pushed that thinking to the fore. But there are simpler ways to optimise for social channels. For instance, any video content to be published through social media should be captioned, as the majority of social media usage is mobile, and the majority of mobiles are set to mute.

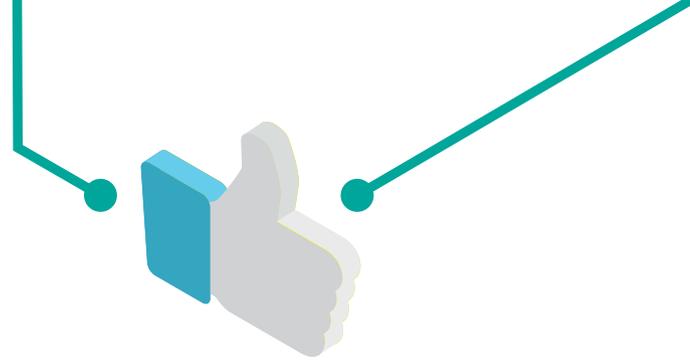
## 4. New ways to target your audience

Most social networks are evolving their targeting models beyond interests and conversations. Facebook and Twitter allow the targeting of users by their email addresses or phone numbers, letting advertisers broaden their remarketing efforts. Conversion tracking functionality like Facebook Pixel allows advertisers to build their own targeting segments based on the behaviour of their audience – for example, to target users who have previously interacted with their content. This type of new functionality lets advertisers become even more precise with their marketing – there are no more excuses for waste. It also highlights the need for marketers to remain current as new features and capabilities are continually deployed by the social media platforms.



<sup>14</sup> Source: TechCrunch <https://techcrunch.com/2015/11/04/facebook-video-views/>

<sup>15</sup> Source: Wall Street Journal <http://www.wsj.com/articles/twitter-looks-to-video-to-increase-advertising-sales-1462146737>



# Six tips for a successful B2B social media advertising campaign

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We know of social media advertising's importance to the B2B marketer. But with it comes risk. Ill-considered campaigns can easily miss their targets – wasting precious budget and generating little value for the business – or worse still, they may annoy your customers and generate negative conversations in public.

With that context in mind, here are six tips to help B2B marketers ensure their social media advertising campaigns stay on track.

## 1

### **Be clear with your objectives**

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As with any marketing campaign it's essential to define what you want to achieve in advance.

- Who are you looking to target?
- What do you want these people to think or do?
- What outcomes will indicate success for your business?

Answering questions like these up front – and staying true to agreed objectives during planning

and execution of the campaign – will help you focus on activity that will contribute value to your business. And make it easier to disregard activity that won't. It will also help to identify any potential barriers that could hinder your campaign, and help to validate whether social media advertising is indeed the right choice given your objectives.

# 2

## Choose the right channels

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Once your objectives are defined, you need to choose the right channels through which to advertise.

- Where are your audience active online?
- How can you identify and segment this audience?
- How much are you willing to pay for this audience to land on your site?

Common sense is key. Bear the likely cost of acquiring audience in mind, and map this to your objectives. Are you happy with the expected returns on your investment?

# 3

## Develop the right content, and deliver it well

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Ultimately, the success of the campaign will depend on the quality of your content, and how that content is delivered.

Content needs to be valuable enough to generate the action you want from your audience – be it a click, share, or email capture. If your goal is awareness think concise and vibrant – infographics and short videos are great for attracting attention. If you're looking to capture leads, you need to offer a fair exchange of value – think of whitepapers that will appeal to your audience's motivations and challenges, and convince them to give up their anonymity.

Consider also how your content will be delivered. The majority of social media usage is via mobile devices, so it's essential that both your content and landing environment are mobile friendly.

Finally, don't forget the messenger. Your ads themselves need a single, clear call-to-action. Make it obvious what you are offering, why it is relevant to your audience, and how they can get it. Test many different creative variations and relentlessly focus on those which work best.

# 4

## Have a plan for monitoring and responding to comments

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It's a given that social media is a two-way street. You need to be prepared for the interaction your campaign generates. A modest social media advertising campaign can generate millions of impressions. It's only natural that some people feel compelled to respond, whether positively or negatively.

- Who do you talk to if a customer asks for detailed technical information on a product?
- What do you do if a customer complains at being targeted with your content?
- How do you react if you are victim of abuse from internet trolls?

Set expectations within your company that – due to the scale of social media advertising – some negative comments will likely arise. It's essential to agree a response workflow in advance of any campaign.

This way you can act quickly if necessary, making the most of any opportunities, and dealing calmly with any negative responses before they escalate.

# 5

## Build a robust reporting framework that measures your campaign's success

As with any marketing campaign, measurement is essential if you want to demonstrate the value of your activity to the business.

The first step is to define your Key Performance Indicators (KPIs). While it's best practice to collect all available data (particularly at the outset of establishing a digital marketing capability), when it comes to analysis it's important to focus on your desired outcomes. Once you have defined the desired sequence of actions or customer journey, it is then possible to create a streamlined series of KPIs that will demonstrate how the campaign is performing through the anticipated sequence of events or actions, and whether you've achieved your goals.

- For brand awareness or perception campaigns this might include the number of people reached; the number of times your content is viewed; the depth to which your content has been consumed (e.g. views to 75% of a blog post's length).
- For lead generation campaigns track the number of email addresses captured; the proportion of those leads that become qualified; those that become customers; and the revenue they generate.
- For transactional e-commerce sites it will be possible to track shopping baskets and revenues generated.

The second step is to identify how you'll measure these KPIs.

Most social media advertising platforms offer near-live reporting on spend, impressions, clicks, and basic demographics for the audience engaged. Such reporting allows you to track and optimise your campaign as it runs: this is the opportunity to A/B test your creative, and focus budget on the combinations that prove most successful.

If the objective is to drive traffic to a website, you also need to consider the behaviour of users once they land on your domain. Implementing Campaign Tracking and Goal Conversion in your website analytics will allow you to better understand the business impact of the campaign, and to compare your success with other demand generation activities. In addition, Facebook and Twitter offer their own conversion tracking functionality, allowing you to analyse the impact each advert variation has had on your bottom line from within the ad platform itself.

If you're running a lead generation campaign you may also want to integrate your campaign with your CRM so the lifetime value of the leads can be measured.

Once KPIs are defined, set clear targets. Have the courage to be ambitious, but make sure they fit the SMART criteria (being Specific, Measurable, Assignable, Realistic, and Time-

bound). Share the targets with your team, and be explicit around expectations: “this is what will equal success; anything less is failure.”

# 6

## Get ready to optimise

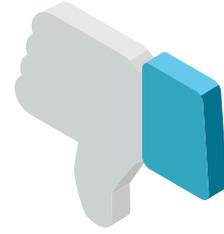
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No matter how good your intentions, reporting is pointless unless it's acted upon. So pay attention to your data from the very start of a campaign. Understand what it is telling you, and learn from it. Stop activity that isn't working. Focus budget and effort on activity that is.

The importance of active campaign management cannot be understated. Marketers that set up a campaign and then watch passively, or simply wait till the budget is spent, are wasting their cash. Creative, content and offers seldom perform as expected. The rich data available via social platforms allows marketers to monitor actual behaviour, adapt and improve in near real time.

Finally, remember that all progress is born from failure, that after all is the purpose of testing. Don't be afraid to test and fail within social media advertising – but make sure you do so within a framework for learning and improvement. Understand why an approach failed to perform, and how it can be improved. While data is key to proving success, don't be distracted by noise – your campaign should be based around commercial outcomes that drive the business forward.

# Three common mistakes to avoid



## 1. Don't ask the intern to do it

While this might (just) work in B2C, it most certainly won't in B2B. You wouldn't trust an intern to run your email marketing, nor would you allow them to telephone your biggest customer for a chat, so why would you trust them to run your social media marketing? It's essential you assemble a team that understands your audience, their pain points and ambitions, and understands in detail the capabilities of the various channels through which to reach them.

## 2. Don't start without a plan

You're spending real money in social media advertising, and mistakes can escalate quickly. While it is usually easy to get started in social, it's also easy to waste time and resources. Understand what you want to achieve, and how you plan to achieve it, before you go anywhere near a social network. Ensure you have support from within the business before you start, and set expectations around what your activity is likely to achieve.

## 3. Don't underestimate the detail

Results are not a given through social media advertising. Success requires an understanding of the mechanics involved, and a commitment to analyse the data and tune each platform as your campaign runs. Make sure you have the appetite and resource to manage your campaign, and to report on how this activity is impacting your business. If you're a little worried, slightly confused – or simply too busy – seek outside help.

# About Metia Group

Metia Group is a global B2B marketing agency with offices in London, Seattle, Austin and Singapore. We employ over 130 digital marketing professionals; each is expert in a particular area of specialization.

Our clients include big corporations and ambitious businesses. We provide them with creative campaigns that reach across geographies, scale massively, can be deployed systematically and measured relentlessly.

We track and measure all of our social media advertising campaigns through our Performance Benchmarking Index. Through this benchmarking index, we understand what success in social media advertising looks like, by channel, by region, and by each clients' objectives.

If you'd like to learn more about our social media advertising team, or the Performance Benchmarking Index, and discuss how we could help support your social media advertising campaigns, please get in touch.

## Metia Group

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 [@metia](https://twitter.com/metia)

 [facebook.com/metia](https://facebook.com/metia)

 [linkedin.com/metia](https://linkedin.com/metia)

## EMEA

 +44 (0)20 3100 3500

 [info@metia.com](mailto:info@metia.com)

## North America

 +1 425 629 5800

 [infoUSA@metia.com](mailto:infoUSA@metia.com)

## Asia

 +65 6224 7992

 [info@metia.com](mailto:info@metia.com)

**metia**