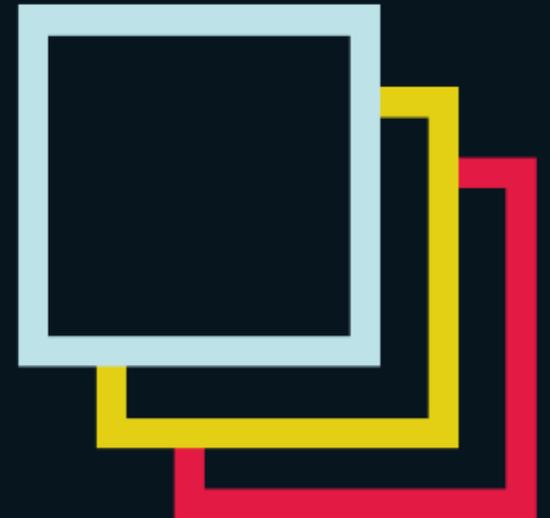


Digital advertising

Advertising technologies

The ad technologies for B2B
you need to be using right now



About this guide

The last few years have seen a proliferation of ad technology with everything from intent audiences to optimisation through artificial intelligence and machine learning – even for B2B, which makes this a really exciting time.

With these technologies now available for B2B, it can be a minefield navigating the options and where to focus spend. After all, there's no point investing in a platform just for the sake of it – you need to think carefully how that works with your strategy.

This guide looks at some of the latest techniques and technologies available and helps you understand and decide what you should consider now. We'll cover each technology and provide a rating in terms of expense as well as some pros and cons to each.

This guide is a sub-section of [Master technology. Define advertising: Breaking boundaries in B2B digital advertising](#), which explores the subject in more detail. Other guides in the series include:

- » [*Key principles in managing high performing B2B digital advertising campaigns*](#)
- » [*Optimisation techniques for B2B digital advertising campaigns*](#)

This guide has been written by Nicola Ray, CEO and Founder of Modern, and Dax Patel, Head of Digital at Modern.

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Don't build on shaky foundations.

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Basics, first and foremost

Reality check

It's easy to be lured by the next shiny new thing, particularly with the pace of change that's happening. The developments in martech and ad land are exciting, but just because they're there, doesn't mean you should jump straight in.

With most things, you need solid foundations that are not only working well but delivering the performance you expect. This requires good integrations, robust set-up, data passing freely, reports that you can rely on and a stable delivery of conversions.

Check list before you start

Here's a quick check-list of systems and processes to evaluate first before investing in new techniques and technologies:

- » Marketing automation platform
- » Lead management processes
- » Lead and marketing funnel reporting by volume, source, campaign and value
- » Performance across Google, Microsoft Advertising, social platforms, programmatic and content syndication
- » Performance benchmarks across all channels against objective, market and asset

Once these elements are working well, then consider expanding your techniques and technologies.



Tailor campaigns with intent data.

1. Intent data platforms to inform campaigns: ££

There are several platforms that use media partnerships to understand how buyers are consuming web content and how keywords relate to that behaviour. This information can then be matched to firmographic or other third party data sources to enable profiles to be built out. This can be great for B2B audiences.

Media publishers are using their databases to build out these audiences across their networks, but there are independent third parties that connect across wider networks that deliver this insight too.

With these platforms you can either select audiences to advertise to or extract the data and use it within other platforms or for other activities and campaign activity.

These platforms are well established for US audiences, but in EMEA they're still in early level maturity mainly due to the complexity of language and legal restrictions around GDPR.

That said, there are some specific EU players that can help from an intent perspective, but it's unlikely that you'll find one solution that works globally – be prepared to invest in multiple platforms for a global solution.

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Simple, freely
available and
easy to test.

2. In-market audiences within ad platforms: £

Most of the platforms are now offering in-market audiences – audiences that have shown interest in a business area. The audiences are expanding now so are more relevant to B2B categories such as business software, and in certain platforms these are now quite granular.

This can also be layered with firmographic or demographic data for better targeting – subject to the audience volumes being viable.

We've found with these audiences that they tend to have a good conversion rate as it's targeted but first, you've got to know what your benchmarks are to determine if this is a good route for you.

By this, we mean that you need to know whether the cost-per-lead (or conversion) is acceptable against other platforms and similar types of conversion. For example, are you willing to pay more for these leads and if so, how much?

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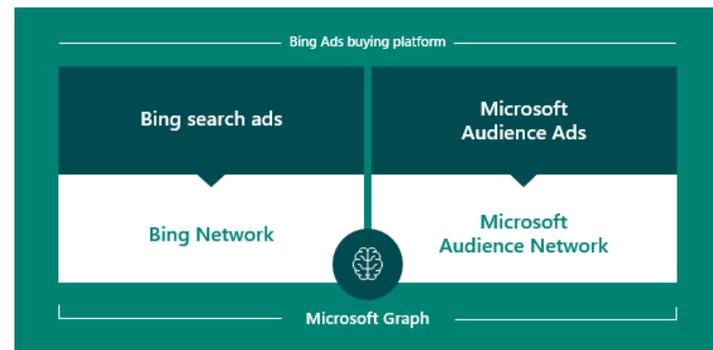
Layering on LinkedIn profile targeting.

3. Microsoft Audience Network: £

Within Microsoft Advertising (formally Bing), you can now target using Microsoft Audience Network which allows you to target based on intent, LinkedIn profile and location, which means it's possible to get super-smart with targeting.

Microsoft's acquisition of LinkedIn is paying off with recent developments including Microsoft Graph where B2B data sets are used to create layers within audience selections on Microsoft Advertising. This creates a huge point of difference for Microsoft Advertising.

Whilst UK audiences aren't that prolific on Microsoft's browsers, it's often the default browser for US audiences – so if you're targeting the US, this should be a no brainer as part of your B2B performance marketing strategy.



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Big spend, but does it deliver the return?

4. Artificial intelligence platforms: £££

Artificial intelligence (AI) is the golden ticket for most marketing innovation companies as everyone wants a piece of AI in their armoury right now. It has its own sense of mystique (or smoke and mirrors depending which way you look at it) with the promise of huge increases in results or high productivity and efficiency for ad management.

We're generally wary as there are a lot of claims out there and few platforms that really deliver for B2B. There's also the premium for 'shiny new' and such platforms need large volumes of data to actually work from an optimisation perspective. Whilst it's transforming *digital marketing* in general, we've not seen it make inroads that much in B2B advertising. The only place where AI is working well is in intelligent chatbots with smart decision trees and a conversational style, which leads us on to...

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**Smarter, faster
conversion
tailored to who
they are, where
they've come
from and what
they're looking
at.**

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5. Conversational marketing and AI-driven chatbots: ££

We love chatbots – especially when they're done well. In the field of conversational marketing and intelligent chat, Drift leads the way. The bot is specifically designed to drive conversions through automated conversations. The process is swift and the conversation automated unless the user requests to speak to a human. The impact: a 50% upweight in conversions.

The chats can be personalised based on where the user is coming from (source), the data list they're in within the CRM (customer, prospect, known, unknown, etc) and where they are on the website – which is why the conversion rate ends up being so high.

Full disclosure – we're a Drift Partner and we'd be happy to show you how conversational marketing and intelligent chat can work for you.

Watch out, in Europe ABA can struggle due to language complexities and GDPR.

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6. Account-based advertising: £££

There are a number of account-based advertising (ABA) platforms around and some are better than others. These platforms enable you to target 'accounts' based on firmographic data or based on pre-selected company lists such as your own data. The ads run off IP and cookie-based technology to target and retarget users.

The technology is particularly strong in the US, but not so mature in the Europe, mainly due to language and GDPR regulations.

These platforms offer another way to target your audience and are particularly good if you're focusing on 'accounts' rather than leads. A word of warning though, you need a high volume of data in order to target, alongside a reasonable budget. Minimum spends apply, so if you're going to test this, be prepared to invest \$100,000+.

That said, if account-based marketing is a long-term strategy, an ABA platform might be just what you need to refocus your digital advertising. Bear in mind, this would need to sit alongside other digital advertising activities and be considered as part of a connected campaign with other platforms. Remember – nothing should be considered in isolation, so don't let this fall into its own silo.

Supplement your targeting with third party intent data.

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7. Intent data feeds: £

Media owners are sharing data across platforms to enable the identification of intent based on the content an individual is consuming online. B2B publishers are offering up intent-based advertising options with criteria such as ‘has shown interest in’ or ‘has consumed X, Y and Z’ topic. Since the targeting is already set to B2B, this becomes highly valuable insight when considering whether to add it into the digital advertising mix.

This is often done either based on the membership of the publisher, for example, TechTarget, or through

a network of publishers where a third party links up the data and sells it on.

One step further are specific intent platforms that create third party data feeds. The data feed can be synced with an ad serving platform and those individuals can be targeted immediately, usually through display or programmatic ads.

The data can also be extracted as a CSV and used for traditional marketing activity. The platforms themselves aren’t cheap, but they’re not expensive either – and depending on your strategy and budget, they could well be a good tool in your armoury.

On a more simple level, and without the outlay of a third party platform, you can tap into ‘in-market’ audiences from with Google and Facebook (US only), where you can get access to prequalified users that have shown interest in, or propensity to purchase, a given category of product. These audiences can be overlaid with other targeting parameters to deliver a strong campaign performance – but remember, it’s only within the constraints of Google’s or Facebook’s network.



Connecting your own data for maximum effect.

8. Platform connectors and APIs to enable cross-platform data sharing: £

As mentioned before data is being shared more easily across platforms and APIs, webhooks and simple triggers. This allows data to be pulled from one place to the next easily, meaning that data, any data, can be shared.

Where this becomes beneficial for digital advertising is with automation for speed and ease of repetitive tasks or by combining data sets for better interrogation or sharing of information.

One use case might be the use of Zapier where you can pull data from your CRM, such as an offline conversion into Google Ads. This allows you to see specific types of conversion by stage within the Google Ads account. This means you can tie back specific campaigns to sales or pipeline allowing you to focus on the campaigns that actually deliver.

See [how to do this with Zapier here](#).

Another use case is the ability to combine audiences across platforms. One way that we're doing this is by combining retargeting audiences across Google, LinkedIn and Facebook. This enables us to see our audience as a whole, rather than a separate audience within a channel – that's great if you want to exclude users for a particular reason or ensure that you include them and serve ads to them as one group.

Both of these are very effective and low-cost ways of using open APIs and connectors to deliver better results within B2B digital advertising.

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Make a step change today

Build out your plan

Rapidly moving technology landscapes offer up too many options, suggestions and ways forward. Often one solution isn't the only solution, so weigh up the options you have carefully and focus on the elements that fit with your strategy and can deliver maximum impact within your budget.

To help you make that step change, start to plan out your next few moves.

Map your next steps

- 1. Take stock and evaluate how your current technology is performing.** If there's room for improvement, then start here
- 2. Consider the wider strategy** and where the best technology will be made: ABM, intent, media platforms, etc
- 3. Consider an external partner** to support implementation and deliver best practice
- 4. Build out the roadmap** for change
- 5. Work out budgets** for ad tech investment and prioritise effort
- 6. Define clear KPIs** for performance from investment

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What's next?

Ready to make that step-change? Let's talk about your next move and where you want to improve.

[Email us](#) or call us today on **+44 (0) 117 332 6700**.

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About the authors



Nicola Ray

Client Partner, Founder

Over 20 years digital experience, with 10 years working with high growth innovative technology businesses across UK and US markets. At Modern, Nicola provides strategy and insights for markets, buyers and digital techniques, including digital demand.



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Head of Digital

Technical and analytics lead for digital projects, including data analysis, data modelling and visualisation. Before Modern, Dax previously headed up the Vodafone global digital team and managed performance marketing for Omnicom Media Group.





About Modern

Through our wiser, faster, stronger mantra, we deliver marketing-led business solutions that enable the global leadership teams we work with to achieve their vision for growth.

By collaboration and partnership, from simple, singular campaigns to complex systems integration, our international team of technical, creative and commercial experts provide the perfect hybrid of marketing agency, consultancy and outsourcing partner for the world's most innovative businesses.

Founded in 2011, we work with some of the world's best high-growth innovators to accelerate their growth.

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