

**Digital advertising**

# Breaking boundaries in B2B digital advertising

Everything you need to  
optimise your B2B advertising  
strategy



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**B2B marketers  
need to review,  
adapt and evolve  
strategies to  
accelerate  
performance.**

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## About this guide

B2B digital advertising is evolving rapidly. Access to data, intent signals, programmatic, new ad serving platforms and the proliferation of ad formats all present opportunities for B2B marketers.

**This guide will cover the following:**

- » Changes in the digital advertising landscape
- » Multi-channel, connected campaigns
- » The metrics you should be focusing on
- » Steps to building-out your digital advertising strategy

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

This report acts as the umbrella for a series of digital advertising guides. The additional guides provide specific guidance, overviews and recommendations on the following topics:

- » ***Key principles in managing B2B performance-based campaigns***
- » ***Optimisation techniques in B2B performance marketing***
- » ***B2B ad technologies that deliver***

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**It's crucial to stay on top of the latest targeting and technologies.**

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## Getting started

It's fair to say that ad spend across B2B is significantly lower than B2C. But in 2019, B2B ad spend topped \$6bn in the US according to eMarketer, sitting at around 10% of the total B2C ad spend. Given this, it's no surprise that new technologies, ad opportunities and platform features are designed with B2C in mind and B2B moves at slower pace.

There are still significant opportunities within B2B and new innovations are coming to the forefront to tackle some of the typical challenges seen in B2B digital advertising.

### The challenge of B2B

With B2B, it's not just the long lead time, different objectives and buyers in a different mindset, it's the practical side too that presents challenges: low search volumes, small audience groups and tracking through the long term with multiple sales stages. All these areas need to be addressed to make headway within B2B digital advertising and ultimately see businesses spending more.

That said, B2B isn't in the dark ages. There are technologies and platform features that you can use to improve performance, they just need to be incorporated in the right way.

As marketers, this means you need a different approach – you need to be agile and you need to be one hundred percent on top of the latest targeting and technologies at your disposal – and whether they're fit for your B2B digital advertising programmes and objectives.

[Learn more about ad technologies](#)



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**Data is not big,  
it's getting  
bigger. Data  
science brings  
deeper insights  
to buyer journey  
through unifying  
behavioural data.**

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## **Change has arrived**

Where once, B2B was seen slow to change and had been hard to deliver low cost-per-acquisition metrics, the pace of change now is rapid. The main ad platforms and third party vendors enable API-driven integrations for fine-tuning, syncing of new data sources and performance analysis powered by artificial intelligence and machine learning. The changes have been coming thick and fast. And yes, we're just on the cusp of fierce acceleration.

The core focus will be on Google Ads, with a smattering of LinkedIn and Facebook mixed in.

More specifically:

- » **The key principles of how performance marketing is changing**
- » **How team mindsets need to be different**
- » **Technologies & techniques to deliver high conversions at low cost**

[View this guide as an interactive web-page.](#)

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**The playing field  
needs to work  
together – you  
can't work in  
digital siloes.**

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## **Making the playing field work together**

In the ['Key principles in managing high performing B2B digital ad campaigns' guide](#), we look at channels and buyer stages and how they can work together. When you have disparate channels it's not good enough to operate in siloes with someone focusing on social and another focusing on Google.

To maximise return, you've got to think about digital advertising as a whole and step back to look at the customer journey: from brand right to through to conversion (and beyond). All channels and tactics need to work harmoniously.

That playing field doesn't just consist of Google, Facebook and LinkedIn, it also includes any account-based advertising you're running along with content syndication, native and programmatic too.

It's this playing field that needs to work harmoniously – and for that to happen you can't work in siloes. Either you need a team that shares and collaborates extremely well, or you need a strategy focused around the customer journey with some smart technology connecting the dots. [Read our 'Ad technologies' guide for advice, guidance and reviews.](#)

At the time of writing this, I've not seen anything that can do cross-platform digital advertising management. (If you know different then I'd love to know... [Email me now.](#)

The closest we've got is through shared audiences across platforms. The integrations between ad platforms are getting better and it's possible to share audiences and data from one platform to another, but it's only just the tip of the iceberg. (I love an API, a webhook and Zapier).

**Best results are delivered when campaigns are custom-crafted for the client.**

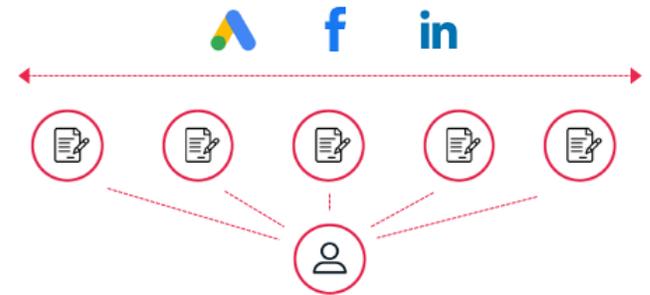
## Connected campaigns

When you have shared audiences, you can connect the journey and connect platforms. The buyer becomes central and the campaigns become connected as one audience group that has engaged with one platform which can be shared with another platform.

For example, an audience within an account-based marketing platform can be shared within LinkedIn, or an audience from Facebook can be shared within other social platforms.



### All assets, seen all the time, across all channels



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**B2B marketing  
lives and dies by  
lead volumes and  
conversions.**

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## Focus on the right metrics

### It's a numbers game

When it comes to digital advertising, especially demand generation, it's all about the numbers.

For the fastest optimisation techniques, it's natural to start with optimising for conversion within the platform and then work towards the target cost-per-lead or cost-per conversion. But this doesn't tell us the whole picture.

Bots, fake accounts and poorly targeted campaigns can deliver plenty of conversions, but should you optimise those campaigns? You can't work purely on the numbers that the platforms tell you. You've got to look at the quality too – and the only way you can do that is by looking further down the funnel.

[Learn more about optimisation techniques](#)

### Qualify for quality

By looking at marketing-qualified leads or sales accepted leads you can start to see where high-quality conversions are coming from. But (*and this is a big but*) it's only possible retrospectively, so you'll only know in a few weeks if you've made an impact. You've got to qualify those leads and enable the systems to identify which campaign delivered the high-quality conversions.

Now, let's say you run a global programme with several hundred campaigns – that means you need a CRM campaign identifier per campaign which identifies the channel, targeting and specific campaign identifiers.

That data needs to pass from the click through to the CRM at the bare minimum. Then, more often than not, the data needs to be pulled into a third-party platform to report effectively. That's a lot of thinking and set-up – and knowing the organisations we work with, this is a significant investment in terms of knowing the numbers and what channels and activity generate the leads.

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**Every industry is unique and every brand within it is unique. Same campaigns for two different brands can deliver completely different results.**

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## **Influence and assisted conversions**

Leads are just one metric – there's more to B2B performance marketing than just leads. Certain channels, platforms and tactics have their place in creating awareness, reinforcing messages or pushing later stage messages where a conversion suggests high intent.

When the budget is low, the focus has to be leads, but when there is some flexibility to invest in brand or top of funnel messages and ads, there's a halo effect that occurs.

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**It's time to make  
a difference.**

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# Building out your B2B performance marketing strategy

## 1. Take a strategy reality check

Take a step back and sense check the quality, quantity and diversity of your programmes. Are you getting what you need and is there the opportunity to improve, reduce waste and drive greater efficiencies?

## 2. Refocus with the customer in mind (and think about tomorrow)

It's easy to look at the technology and activity and keep going, but it's always best to put the customer first. Know your buyers, know where they are, know how they behave and where they seek value. Then build your strategy and plan of attack around their behaviours.

## 3. Interrogate your data and reporting capability

Review the data you have and ask yourself – are you getting the answers you need? Data is critical to deliver better performance so it's worth spending time to ensure that the digital architecture, conversion tracking and CRM data is all singing and syncing.

## 4. Check content, assets and conversion points available

When you know your buyers, re-evaluate the content and conversion points you have for them. A period check of assets and landing pages is critical, as well as considering if there are other suitable assets to utilise (but think carefully about how they are planned into the programme).

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**Some things just aren't possible in-house, so choose partners that share your vision and can support your programmes.**

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**5. Check the programme is designed to maximise the objective**

It may seem obvious, but sense check that the programme you're running has actually been designed to deliver what you need. A third party review is always useful for fresh thinking and a different perspective.

**6. Ensure the platforms are working together rather than in siloes**

Review how you're using the platforms and combining intelligence across each. Are there areas where you could benefit from combined data or a more integrated strategy?

**7. Evaluate the team you have and consider reskilling, upskilling or outsourcing**

Once you've evaluated your performance and reviewed your strategy, turn to your people and determine if you have the right skills mix within your team. Do you need to train the team, expand headcount or could you get the specialist skills you need more effectively by outsourcing?

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**8. Collaborate with partners who can enable your vision**

Some things just aren't possible in-house, so choose partners that share your vision and can support your programmes with continuous improvement, ideas and ultimately results.

**9. Review technologies available and evaluate which can enhance capability or expand capacity**

Be cautious with committing to technology and ensure that it drives performance rather than ties you in on a long (and unprofitable) contract. Those silver bullets for B2C are unlikely to ring true for B2B, so be aware.

**10. Ensure reporting systems are in place for thorough evaluation**

It's critical that data is passed from system to system seamlessly in order to ascertain value from digital advertising. Focus on data syncing and the reports that show ROI and you're onto a winner.



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**Make a step  
change today.**

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## What next?

Find a moment to take stock and assess what elements of this guide apply to you. The additional resources below will give you more detail about evaluating performance, technologies and help to shape your management principles, so look through these too.

When you're ready, **let's talk about making your vision a reality.**

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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.



## Dax Patel

**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.

# Contact

## Talk to us today

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