



GUIDE 2022

**Making paid
media part of
your digital
communications
strategy**

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ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Greg has always been interested in media and is a keen writer, so PR and communications is a natural fit for him. He started his career at the University of Brighton Students' Union in a two-person marketing and communications team, where he had to hit the ground running.

Greg then moved to the US, where he lived for five years. He worked at a PR agency in San Francisco with clients from a range of industries including retail, property and tech. He also spent some time at an early childhood education charity in Oakland, California, where he achieved two of his biggest PR successes: a quote in an *Economist* article, and a story about the charity on NBC News.

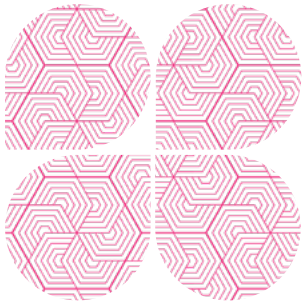
Introduction

An effective content strategy doesn't rely on only one tactic. As many types of content that can be created, there are as many different outlets that can be leveraged to promote it. Magenta works to get our clients' messages heard organically, but we also recognise the value in supporting those efforts with other tactics.

Paid media is an effective method for promoting content and driving exposure. It can be a fantastic way to expand your reach as a company, particularly a small or new businesses looking to build an audience or help your business overtake your competitors by funnelling more of the demand to your business and away from theirs. It has become an effective strategy for better targeting and control of who is seeing your content.

While navigating media and communications can be complex, a basic understanding of what paid media has to offer opens a new world of comms opportunities. Combining efforts across earned, owned and paid media can prove to be really powerful.





This guide takes you through the process.

What is paid media?

Paid media is advertising in a traditional sense; it requires the purchase of ad space. However, it expands beyond what many imagine when talking about advertising. Common paid media includes display or banner advertising and search engine marketing (SEM). But it also includes paid for social media promotion and pay-to-play articles (also known as sponsored or native content).

While paid media offerings vary, they have a number of benefits and disadvantages in common. Getting your name out there is incredibly difficult and paid media can give you a much-needed boost in a competitive marketplace. It can offer rapid results that are easy to track and a ROI that is easy to quantify. You have tight control over the message, and it is easy to target specific audiences. Paid media is great for promoting individual campaigns when waiting for organic growth won't cut it.

Of course, paid media does cost and for small businesses and start-ups, up-front advertising costs can be a big investment. Increased competition in your sector will also mean that more budget will likely need to be invested to see a return. This can be worth-while for the initial boost your company needs or during a particular campaign. However, in the long-term, the quality of your content should be able to sell itself and earned and owned pathways for media can be pursued. If your company doesn't take the time to invest in these pathways, however, it can be easy to become reliant on paid media.

There are a variety of routes an organisation can take when considering paid media opportunities and each comes with its own benefits and price tag. By understanding the fundamentals, your organisation can determine which form or forms of paid media are most appropriate, how to spot a good opportunity, and what exactly you're paying for.




Display advertisements

Whenever you browse the internet, you will come across countless display ads. These boxes appear on websites and social media, framing the content that your potential consumers will be using throughout their day. Their position on the page will depend on the type of advert. Traditional banner ads, for example, are displayed across the top of a webpage above the content. Display ads can offer value across the entire customer journey. However, the style and content of the ads may vary depending on their target audience. Typically display ads are used for low cost-per-click top of funnel marketing campaigns that reach large volumes of your target audience, a great way to populate your retargeting lists for more bottom-of-funnel marketing, especially if your website is not attracting much organic or referral traffic.

Responsive display ads - These adverts are typically image-based. It is important to remember that over 80 per cent of internet users use mobile devices to access the internet. This means that your display ads may be viewed on a range of screen sizes and layouts. A single, static image might look great on a quality computer monitor but appear squashed and hard to read on a mobile screen. When setting up a responsive ad, you can submit a number of different images, headlines and content, and the display platform will use these to adjust the advert size, appearance, and format to fit the available space in order to get the best response.

Example of your ad
160 x 600




With teams in London and Toronto, together with partners around the world, we can seamlessly support your organisation

Get in touch

www.magentaassociates.co


Example of your ad
480 x 120



With teams in London and Toronto, together with partners around the world, we can seamlessly support your organisation

Get in touch

Example of your ad
300 x 250



With teams in London and Toronto, together with partners around the world, we can seamlessly support your organisation

Get in touch


Example of your text ad
300 x 250

With teams in London and Toronto, together with partners around the world, we can seamlessly support your organisation

Get in touch

www.magentaassociates.co

Example of your ad
720 x 90



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Steps of the
customer
journey



Native ads - Native ads are designed for placement on a specific webpage or platform with the same style as the content on that platform. As a result, they don't look like adverts. You are likely to have come across them as the top two returns on a Google search. It might be only after a second look that you will notice that these are labelled as adverts. All native ads must be labelled as adverts.

Video and GIF ads - Videos are increasingly popular, particularly on social media platforms. GIFs are animated videos and text. Like video ads, they may draw the eye more effectively than static images but without high quality design, they won't hold the attention of the viewer.

Display adverts are an important element of driving brand awareness. Prominent positioning, particularly on respected and trusted websites drive both awareness and engagement. Retargeting adverts, which are directed at those who have already visited your site or social media, can then be used to recover previously interested audience segments to drive conversions. Finally, display ads can also be used to remind repeat customers of your presence or advertise new products that might also be of interest.

Display adverts offer a wide array of formats and platforms through which to demonstrate your organisation's offering. Using the right platform has the potential to expand your brand reach to millions of people internationally – or to a defined local audience.



How to use display ads

When using display ads, your best asset is a great designer. The design should be tightly targeted and determined by the advert type, platform, campaign type, and audience. Consider who your advert will target:

- **Contextual targeting** – also known as in-text advertising. This form of targeting is driven by behaviour-based keywords, search and site topics, or specific URLs. The advert platform will use browser history data and website content to best place the adverts alongside relevant content. While this approach uses algorithms to carefully target the user, they rely on less personal data than forms such as retargeting. As such, they may become a preferred option as online privacy becomes an increasingly debated issue.
- **Interest targeting** – uses predefined audiences. If you have a good understanding of your typical audience demographic, it can be useful to build a ‘custom audience’. Otherwise, you can use a predefined audience. Once defined, the ads can be placed on web content that best matches the browsing pattern of your chosen audience – even if that isn’t directly relevant to your product. If you’re targeting specialists in a field who are consuming niche content, this might be particularly effective.
- **Retargeting** – ads are aimed at potential customers who have previously interacted with your content but have not converted yet. This form of targeting typically uses conversion metrics as the key performance indicators whereas both contextual targeting and interest targeting are usually more about brand awareness and engagement.

The type of advert you opt for may depend on what audience you are targeting and where they sit in the customer journey. Responsive display ads visible across an array of sites may be the best way to build brand awareness and reach new audiences. Native adverts, however, can be used to retarget as they will be more notable to those who are already familiar with your brand name and by positioning your content on a respected site, you reinforce your brand’s positive image.

Paid social media

According to a survey from the Content Marketing Institute, 72 per cent of top B2B performers said they used paid social. Paid social media sits alongside owned media. Owned media is that which is shared on a platform owned and run by a company. That includes the company’s website and social media pages. However, most of the major social media platforms offer opportunities to use their internal algorithms to promote content more widely or in a more curated way.

Why use paid social?

Like display ads, paid social posts have the potential to expand your reach as an organisation beyond your current fans and followers. It allows great reach to target audience segments, offers retargeting options to recover interested parties to your website, and can complement regular posts. A big differentiator between social media ads and display ads is the audience data. Social media ads are programmed to target specific audiences based on their network, hobbies and interests, professions and even relationship status. As a result, social ads can effectively get your message to your intended audience quickly and effectively.



A steady stream of high-quality social posts is important to build and maintain brand awareness. However, reaching that audience initially is the real challenge and this is where paid social can be particularly valuable to grow your page. It takes around eight touchpoints on average for a potential buyer to reach the point where they are ready to make a purchase. Social media is a reliable platform with high audience dwell times where potential buyers will return to again and again, increasing your opportunity to connect.

Where to begin with paid social posts

B2B paid social media content differs slightly from B2C content. Your audience is not looking to impulse buy and this is ok because social media ads are intended more for the passive buyer. Rather, they are looking to build a relationship with a supplier. Your main task with these adverts, therefore, is to inform your audience about your products or services.

Decide what platform/platforms you want to use. While social media content tends to be short and sweet, it isn't worth paying for poorly written and designed content so overstretching your marketing team by reaching out on every platform is not the best idea. Do some research into your sector and see what platforms competitors are getting an audience on. For organisations only just starting out in social media, LinkedIn can be a great place to start. According to LinkedIn, 97 per cent of B2B marketers use their platform for content marketing.

As a B2B supplier, you are far more likely to have solutions tailored to different customer bases. It is therefore all the more valuable to target your advertising carefully. Segmenting audiences by location, company or buyer type and company size, and targeting ads accordingly, gives you a much better chance at capturing attention.

Another way to build brand awareness without targeting specific products is to offer expertise. Potential buyers will be looking to educate themselves on the market and empower themselves to make better purchasing decisions. Social media can be an ideal platform to share free information snippets and videos that position your organisation as an expert in its sector and give potential buyers a reason to follow your social media pages or visit your website.

Pay for placement

Pay for placement, pay-to-play, or P2P can be a contentious form of paid media. In most cases, content such as articles will usually fall under 'earned media' i.e., the quality of the content has earned you placement. If your organisation is interested in engaging with thought leadership, you should be looking to write content at a quality that it will be accepted into industry magazines. However, certain P2P opportunities might be worth the cost for getting your name out to the right audience.

Such articles should provide thought leadership. As with sharing information on social media, this is an opportunity to position your business as an expert in your sector. One survey found that 79 per cent of would-be buyers point to thought leadership as critical for determining which providers they want to learn more about. If you are paying for placement, do some research into the platform on which you will place your content. The image your content projects will depend not only on its quality but on the quality of the site publishing it. Do some research into site or publication readership and look at the quality, style and content of other articles before aligning your content with it. You can also check the domain authority of a site. For this reason, pay for placement content goes hand-in-hand with SEO and display ad campaigns very nicely.

Search engine marketing

Search engine marketing (SEM) is marketing – paid or organic – that aims to direct traffic from search engines to your online content. It falls into two categories:

- Search Engine Optimisation (SEO) – this is the organic option for SEM. It relies on an understanding of the algorithms used to rank search results and creating content and sites that will be ranked highly – ideally within the first five results for relevant searches.
- Paid search ads – this is the paid SEM option. The ad is displayed alongside search results so can target an audience looking specifically for your product or service.



Why use SEM?

When carrying out research on a new topic, looking for buying advice, or searching for information on a topic of interest, where do you go first? For millions of people globally, a search engine is the first place to turn. The majority of search engine users will then click on an ad or one of the top five results. Making it into this prime spot, therefore, has the potential to direct a huge amount of traffic to your site or content at the time when the searcher is demonstrating the most need for a solution or answer. As you get lower on the results page, the returns rapidly diminish. So few people make it onto the second page of search engine results that it has been joked that “page 2 of Google is the best place to hide a body”. Being conscious of how your content appears on search engines, therefore, is an important element of any marketing campaign.

Using paid search advertisements

As with any paid media, search ads can be highly effective for a quick return on a short-term campaign. However, they don't replace SEO but optimally would go hand-in-hand. A good marketing team should use the two in conjunction. As this guide focuses on paid media, however, the following covers paid search advertisements.

As the world's leading search engine, Google is, unsurprisingly, also the world's leading provider of search ads. Its platform, Google Ads, can be used to plan and pay for campaigns. The ads can be displayed in a number of ways. Google presents ads much like native display ads – in the same format as search results with a small symbol to indicate that the content is paid for. These results appear above the search results, putting them in a prime position for users to interact with.

Paid ad financing is slightly complex, based on a second-price auction system in which advertisers pay enough to surpass their nearest competitor and ranking is based on format and quality in addition to cost. This means the paid search results should all be relevant, and all other things being equal, the advertiser paying £0.01 more will be in the top position.

Pricing methods and ROI

There are a number of pricing methods available for paid media and they will vary according to the type of media you are working with. P2P articles, for example, may be a straight fee. However, when developing campaigns, you should have an idea of what you are paying for and what return you are expecting.

Three of the main pricing methods are:

1. Cost per thousand (CPM) which measures the exposure your ad gets and costs per thousand impressions, which means you pay a cost for every thousand views of your ad. This is a good means of reaching a new audience. Remember – it can take eight touchpoints to convert someone into a buyer, so even if an exposure doesn't convert someone or even direct them to your site, it is the first step to brand awareness. CPM bidding is useful for top of funnel marketing where brand awareness and engagement metrics are the key performance indicators.
2. Pay per click (PPC) is increasingly being used to drive traffic to a site. For those on a tight budget, this limits costs only to exposure that engages with your ads. Pay per click is a useful middle of funnel bidding strategy to ensure relevant search volume is finding its way to your website. Engagement metrics are the key performance indicators here.
3. Cost per acquisition (CPA) is a bottom of funnel bidding strategy that optimises cost per sale or lead. Conversion metrics are the key performance indicators for CPA strategies.

With an understanding of these units of payment, you can begin to decide how much exposure is worth to your business. Consider also how well your site is converting. If 2 per cent of visitors are buying, you could use this conversion rate as a baseline for your PPC traffic. The keywords you use will also vary in price as highly competitive markets will drive prime advertising costs up. Do some research and understand what you can expect to pay for certain keyword searches. Platforms such as SEMrush can be used to research keywords and plan campaigns accordingly.



Should you opt for paid media?

Paid media has distinct advantages and can help to reach audiences that might otherwise be unavailable to your company. It can accelerate any SEO campaign or help grow your social media channels, especially in early phases of your business or for significant product or service launches. It can help to bring a lot of awareness to a brand with relatively little time and cost investment. It is also flexible and gives your company lots of control over audience targeting and advert content.

However, it comes with disadvantages and there are ways in which it cannot compete with organic traffic. Overly targeted content can appear too often to the same people, leading to them to tune it out or, worse, begin to find your content irritating. Paid media can be a big expense for organisations that are just starting up or are working on small budgets. Those with larger budgets may also become dependent on it and fail to produce high-quality organic content.

Before designing a paid media campaign, it is important to understand your organisation's intentions and expected return on investment. From here, your organisation can adopt a mix of both paid and organic marketing techniques that engage your audience throughout the customer journey.

Above all, remember that the online environment is always evolving, and your audience will evolve with it. Digital marketing is an opportunity to try new ideas and experiment with what works. A/B testing and creative problem solving can be applied throughout the process and should be part of your company's brand development.

There is no simple, step-by-step process to producing a paid media campaign; the concept is too broad. But by understanding the options available and researching the ecosystem surrounding your sector, your organisation can quickly develop effective campaigns that drive conversion.

Do you need support with Paid Media?

For 10 years, Magenta has been the communication expert in the built environment, designing and delivering bespoke communication strategies. We are perfectly placed to advise and support organisations of all sizes through the minefield of integrated communications, using earned, owned and paid tactics to reach key target audiences.

Whether you need a bespoke communications strategy or support in creating engaging material to deliver a strategy you've already produced, we can help.

With teams in London and Toronto, together with partners around the world, we can seamlessly support your organisation. Get in touch at www.magentaassociates.co, email info@magentaassociates.co or call +44 (0)20 3773 3622 to speak to one of the team.





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