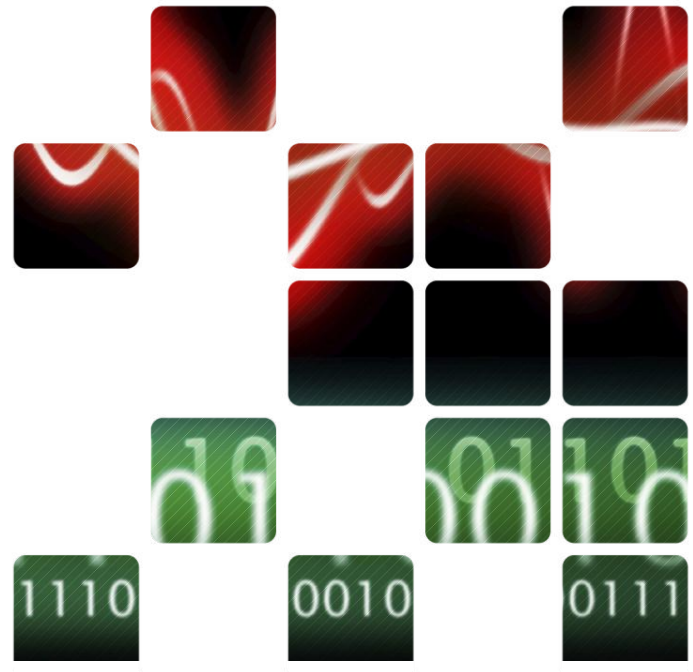




Creative, Meet Analytics

A Guide for Designing Great Ads for Measurable Success



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1. Table of Contents

1. Setting the table	3
2. Creative and Data: Working Together	3
1.1. Define your goals in data terms	3
1.2. Clicks vs. Interaction	4
3. Design for Measured Success	5
1.3. Expanding your interaction	5
1.1.1 Expansion rate	5
1.1.2 A Click is a bigger commitment	6
1.1.3 Get the timing right.....	7
1.1.4 Expansion Duration	7
1.4. Video ads in the online world	8
1.5. Adapting to online time	8
1.6. Adapting to online audio	9
1.7. Adapting to online interactivity	9
4. Post campaign analysis: Learning from the past to make a better future	10
1.8. Deeper insight – understand your online audience	10
1.1.5 The search for the ideal media buy.....	10
1.1.6 Examine your creative – what to use and what to lose next time	11
5. Prove success with ROI	12
6. Conclusion	13

2. Setting the table

The focus of this paper is the role of data collection and analysis in the lifecycle of online advertising campaigns, and how data can help define success and push it to higher levels. For the sake of scope, let's assume that all your campaigns have a great media plan and creative concept. This document is about maximizing data driven success.

- Before the first insertion order is filled out or first thumbnail is scribbled on a napkin, the goal of your campaign must be identified in terms of data. What do you want to achieve, how much of it do you want to achieve, and what measurement best communicates the two? Once your goal is defined in terms of collectable data, ask how the creative execution can drive towards that goal. And, when the campaign is finished, an in-depth data analysis is crucial to leverage your past experience to better optimize future campaigns.

3. Creative and Data: Working Together

1.1. Define your goals in data terms

Customer attention, it has been argued, is the main currency in cyberspace economy. And obtaining measurable attention should be business goal of your campaign, regardless of the product or service being promoted.

Click through rate (CTR) has often been used as the key measurement to analyze campaigns but it is a vestige from the day when standard banner dominated online advertising. Surely it is a poor metric for the currency of attention. With the evolution of ad formats that drive users to interact with the ad (play, expand, press, etc.), more sophisticated measurements were developed to gage the effectiveness of branding campaigns.

Although CTR is still a useful measurement, other measurements of engagement often times provide clearer insight. High click through rate might be the goal for ads that don't provide a lot of information upfront and depend on a landing page to provide product details. A high engagement goal (interaction rate, expansion rate, expansion duration, etc.) is a better assessment of the success of ads that brings the landing page directly into the banner.

Regardless if you plan to use CTR, interaction rate or any other metric, be sure to define your business goals in terms of measured attention, by answering the following questions:

- How many customers should view the campaign?
- How many customers should engage with the campaign?
- What will be the measurable average engagement?

It is a good practice to reach consensus on these points upfront, and make sure all stakeholders (advertiser, creative, media, publisher) are on board.

Examples:

- A brand-centered campaign may have a goal of reaching 2,000,000 viewers, of which 300,000 will engage with the brand by spending 150 seconds on the ad.
- A direct response campaign will have a goal of reaching 1,000,000 viewers of which 95,000 will interact with the ad by clicking thru to a download page.
- A combined, brand + direct response campaign may have a goal of reaching 2,000,000 viewers of which 200,000 play a video for 75% and 50,000 fill up a contact request form.

1.2. Clicks vs. Interaction

After the campaign's data goal is identified, the creative needs to be executed in manner that ensures successfully achieving it. If the goal is clicks, creative needs to act as a teaser for the landing page, sparking the imagination by revealing only minimal information to intrigue the user to click through. Conversely, if the goal is a high interaction rate, creative should include several custom interactions that will reveal different types of information based on the viewer's behavior.

Let's consider a campaign for a new movie launch, to illustrate how creative can serve these different goals.

If your data goal is to maximize the number of site visits, a creative option might be to show a short interest-generating clip with little information beyond "Coming to a theater near you". The idea here is that if the viewer is compelled by the clip the only route to "learn more" is a click through.

Now, if your goal is high interaction rates, the creative would look very different. The preview of the movie will probably be longer with multiple clips and various rollover/click interactions that would provide actor facts, behind the scenes footage, downloadable, etc. Of course, it is important to never overwhelm the user with content, but assuming the ad provides an appealing and friendly way to “learn more”, the interaction rate should increase. Good reporting like the Engagement Summary report in Eyeblaster Analytics and proactive monitoring will provide the insight needed to ensure your creative execution is aligned with your campaign’s data goals.

4. Design for Measured Success

1.3. Expanding your interaction

The expandable banner has been proven one of the most effective ad formats. It strikes a careful balance between the publisher’s editorial goal – it starts as a banner that doesn’t take much space – and the advertiser’s need for a large canvas to deliver its creative message. The expansion is fundamental to two important success metrics: *Expansion rate* – how many people did you convince to press/ roll to view more details; and, *Expansion duration* – how long were you able engage them with your ad and ultimately your brand.

Again, creative executions can influence these two metrics of success.

1.1.1 Expansion rate

Getting the user to expand is obviously the first goal in designing an expandable ad.

Conceptually, this is a perpetual challenge too. As soon as an effective creative concept is developed to get users to expand it is quickly copied and its novelty, and thus, its effectiveness wears off. Despite this, there are a few keys to keep in mind when designing an expansion:

1.1.1.1 *Make it easy-*

Make the hit area of the banner large and easy to identify.

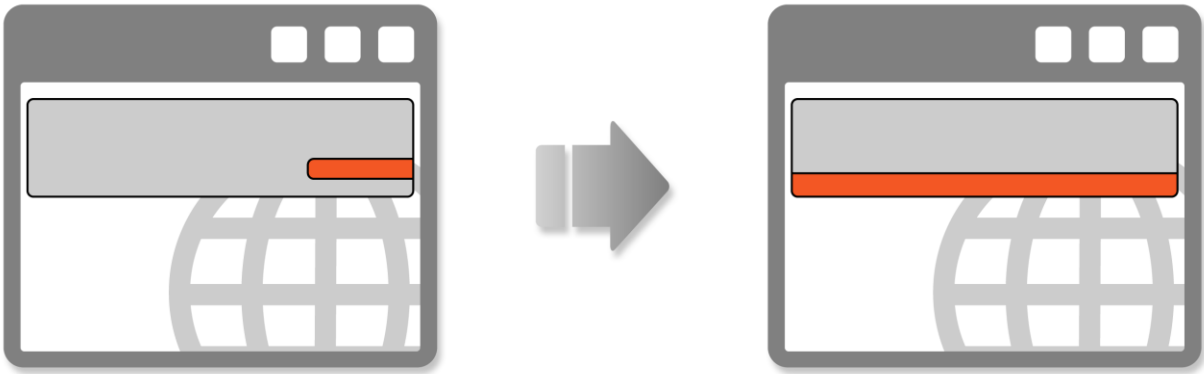


Exhibit 1: a restricted hit area (left) lowers expansion rate

1.1.2 A Click is a commitment

Users go online to be entertained, work, shop, learn or communicate. When your ad calls upon them to click, they recall the common standard banner experience. Here's what you're really asking them to do, in their perception:

- Stop whatever it is they were doing online to begin with
- Wait for 15-20 seconds for the landing page to finish loading
- Spend another 20-30 seconds to see if the landing page is of interest and value

You know the banner is expandable, but the users may not. They have clicked before, and this is their perception. If attention is currency, this is an expensive proposition.

If you decide to expand the banner using a click, you will have a lower expansion rate but you can be assured that there are few mistakes in the expansion and that these clickers are truly interested and will likely reward you with longer expansion duration. If you choose this path,

make sure your viewers understand what to expect. It may be a good practice to state 'Click to Expand' rather than just 'click' or 'learn more'.

1.1.3 Get the timing right

A great approach is to introduce a slight delay to expansion. This will cause the panel to expand only if the mouse hovers on the banner for a predetermined time. The delay will filter out accidental expansions - great news as you will not annoy 'passer-bys', and will gain more meaningful information in expansion statistics.

The challenge is identifying the optimal delay time. Delay too much and users will assume the expansion may never happen - and simply move on. Thankfully, the Eyeblaster platform take care of this challenge. You can configure the delay at any time without touching the Creative. By default, Eyeblaster will calculate the ideal delay based on the size of the banner and the speed of mouse movement.

Be sure to verify what works for your campaign by monitoring users' expansion rates and duration data using tools like the 'Expandable Banner Metrics' report in Eyeblaster Analytics.

1.1.4 Expansion Duration

Once creative has achieved its initial goal of getting the users to expand, the second challenge is to maximize brand exposure by getting the users to interact as long as possible with the ad. There are various ways to persuade users to keep the panel open, keeping in mind the more engaging the experience, the more likely the user will stay. Including a simple game inside the expanded panel is an effective way to increase expansion duration.



Exhibit 2: Three engaging games maximize Expansion Duration and brand exposure

1.4. Video ads in the online world

The growing popularity of video ads is clear and is constantly growing. Not surprisingly, online video often means repurposing TV ads by simply placing them in TV-like boxes inside the banner. There are differing opinions whether this practice will end up ultimately being the best way to reuse video shot for broadcast, but in the meantime it is clear that creative adjustments are needed to meet measurable data goals online.

1.5. Adapting to online time

In front of a TV, viewers tend to have time on their hands – 30 seconds is a reasonable time in the TV world, relative to a 45 minutes show. In the online world, 30 seconds is closer to eternity. Users browse from one page to another at an incredible speed. Asking them to stop for 30 second is a real challenge.

Even the structure of television spots can be problematic. TV ads using a narrative style might not show the brand until the very last shot. Using such video online definitely limits brand exposure. Online video ads need to get the point very quickly, and should expose the users to the brand very early in the video. A good technique for this is including branding elements in a video wrapper.



Exhibit 3: a branded wrapper maximize brand exposure in this repurposed TV spot

1.6. Adapting to online audio

Another difference between the two mediums is that TV is generally experienced with sound on while online is often experienced with sound off. A large percentage of online usage happens in a work environment with the sound almost always muted. Eyeblander research reveals the number of users that actively turned the sound on in an ad is extremely low. In fact, the only clear exception to this trend are young kids spending most of their online time at home.

1.7. Adapting to online interactivity

The most important thing to take into consideration when moving TV assets to the online world is the inherent difference between the two media. TV viewing is a passive experience, while browsing online is active.

When incorporating video into ads, creative needs to maximize the interactivity of the online world and make sure the video is in line with these unique characteristics. Use it as an opportunity to make your creative even more engaging and more effective. Using Eyeblander Analytics' Detailed Video Metrics will allow you to experiment and examine the effect that different creative have on such measurements like video start rate, video duration, etc. With experimentation and analysis, you can eventually optimize your video creative for best results.

5. Post campaign analysis: aiming higher next time

At a campaign's completion it is crucial to step back and analyze its performance and learn from past mistakes to run a more successful campaign next time around. First step is to use Eyeblaster Analytics gain insight how user interactions, not just the number of impressions, affected the performance of your campaign. Understanding this aspect is also important in evaluating the efficiency of your different media buys. It's equally important to determine what aspects of your creative worked best. Let's examine these three analytics steps.

1.8. Deeper insight – understand your online audience

In the past when analyzing the reach of the campaign it was important to look at unique impressions – out of total impressions, how many people were reached. However, failing to drill deeper is ignoring the inherent power of the internet. With Eyeblaster's analytics Unique Metrics Summary Report – you can go the next step and understand how did the **people** who saw the ad interacted with it, rather than how many impressions it received. With the four new Eyeblaster metrics, you can see what percentage of your total reach clicked, interacted, expanded or viewed the video in the ad.

The big advantage the online world has over TV is its level of interactivity. Instead of saying campaigns reached X number of people, you can differentiate the people who actually saw the ad from the people who were shown the ad but didn't notice it. One can now qualify the reach of a campaign and identify the percentage of users who were actually interested and hence interacted with it. TV audience is a measured sample and is really only an indication that the TV was on not that anybody actually was watching it

1.1.5 The search for the ideal media buy

When planning the media buy for your campaign, demographic data can be used effectively to identify where your target audience lies. But it is important to keep in mind that your target does not live in a world of silos. If your target audience is best reached in publishers X,Y and Z, do not assume that they are only exposed to only one publisher at a time and that they do not easily move from one publisher to the next. Understanding this overlap and identifying

which publisher provides you the most exclusive unique viewers is an important key to an effective online media buy.



Exhibit 4: publisher contribution to campaign reach can be analyzed with Overlap report

In order to make better decisions on your next campaign it is crucial to understand what the overlap between the various publishers is and the differences in their costs. Additionally, it is important to see how successful the different publishers were in achieving the campaign's goal. Even if the audience is mostly redundant between two publishers, it might be that in one site the audience is more likely to stop and watch a video, and hence the performance information needs to be factored in.

In order to optimize your media buy it is helpful to learn from past campaigns targeting a similar audience. First you must understand the extent of the overlap, then take into consideration the cost and the quality of audience in terms of your campaign goal. Once you put these pieces together you can optimize your budget spend to make sure you reach the 'highest quality' audience (i.e. the one that answers your goal) with as little overlap as possible.

1.1.6 Examine your creative – what to use and what to lose next time

Now that you know what worked in terms of the placement you need to identify which part of the creative worked best. Given the goal of your campaign, check the various ad formats and see if you can identify a format that worked best also comparing the different creative execution.

The next step to understanding your creative is to drill down on your success. It is important to understand which specific part of that ad worked best. If you used several panels, each one with a different marketing component, was there one which was more appealing to your users? If one of the panels outperformed the others determine if the creative and its position influenced this. In other words, if a panel is the default panel, one would assume it would have a higher expansion rate than the others without necessarily being more appealing. All things being equal from a creative perspective, a high-performing panel with a specific marketing message is a good indicator that this message resonated with your audience.

Similarly, drilling down into the various video assets or custom interactions in an ad can provide meaningful insight for your next campaign. For example, if your ad has 3 different personas, determine which one was more popular, and make sure to use that persona in your next campaign. Again, it is important to be conscious of all creative biases that might exist. Bigger fonts, location in the ad (tendency of users is to start interacting with the left and then move to the right) and sometimes even a difference in color are all factors to take into account in order to truly understand which part of the creative resonated most with your audience.

There is a natural bias toward the first panel, interaction or video on the left side of the ad. If however any of the other interactions is higher, it means that that interaction was more appealing and should be re-examined on your next campaign.

6. Prove success with ROI

After conducting your analysis of the campaign and understanding how to improve your next campaign, it is crucial to use data to prove a campaign's success in terms of ROI (return on investment). One of the inherent benefits of online over traditional media is its measurability. This accountability exists in no other channel – TV, billboard, radio etc. Online campaigns have the unique opportunity to truly prove their effectiveness.

In order to calculate the return on investment you need to determine the campaign's cost and estimate its return. Cost can be derived from your media buy. Using CPM, CPC or CPA cost is easily calculated. Return is a bit more elusive.

One way to derive revenue is check how many people converted. If the conversion is buying an actual product or service – then the revenue is going to be the value of the shopping cart in the website. If conversion is downloading a brochure or filling out some type of form, then you need to estimate the ‘worth’ of such an action. In other words, once the users have converted, how likely are they to buy your service or your product and what is the worth of that purchase.

Using tags on the advertiser’s web site to track conversion and affixing a value to these conversions is the best way to measure the return of the campaign, however there are other ways of assessing return. Upon setting up the campaign you can assign a value to a click or a specific interaction you believe is a good indication of “buying intent.” Again, you need to assess whether the order was the result of that action while taking online and offline factors into consideration.

Granted, calculating online ROI is a nuanced science, but it is much more accurate than any other media where ROI is largely an art of guesstimation.

7. Conclusion

There is no single recipe for creating effective online advertising, but defining your campaign in terms of a data goal and understanding how creative execution can help you achieve that goal takes you a long way down the road to success. In addition to introducing data to creative, your future success will rely on how well you leverage the uniqueness of the online medium, the quality of insight you gain from analyzing your results and how you choose to calculate return on investment.

Then... you can begin to fill out those insertion orders and scribble on that napkin.