What the rise of paid social media advertising means for you

By Ryan Kh

24 Jan 2017

Paid social media advertising has been around for some time. Yet the concept of 'pay to play' has only become particularly prominent in the last few months. With practically every social media platform crippling organic reach, you need to adjust to this new reality of pay to play.

© Marcel de Grijs via 123RF

Do you have to pay for play?
Strictly no. Something that goes viral will always have a better reach than pay to play, because word of mouth marketing trumps everything. For standard posts, you are going to have no choice but to pay for social media advertising if you want to get the best reach. Take Facebook as an example. A cake company could post the best special offer in the world on their latest batch of baked goods, yet only their top 15% of users (ranked by engagement) are going to see their post in their news feed. In short, there is nothing you can do about that.

Why have social media companies done this?

- Users were inundated with spam, because they saw literally EVERYTHING people posted.
- Social media companies rely almost exclusively on paid advertising to survive.

- Organisations have discovered the potential that selling advertising to businesses can bring.

The changes came in gradually and have continued to come in gradually. There are many ways that this has happened. Paid advertising platforms have been invented, but companies have also steadily stacked the deck against organic reach. For example, Instagram recently altered the way items appear in their newsfeeds. They ordered their feed by relevance, as opposed to when items were posted. Facebook did the same thing years ago, and it meant paying for advertising was the way to counter these changes.

Is this in your best interest?

You may think that this is just an attempt at squeezing businesses for something they have always done. It is actually in your best interest to see [pay to play advertising] come in. It kicks out the spammers and the people who are not serious. You are no longer competing with companies who are simply posting nonsense onto the newsfeeds of your customers. It does require an investment of time and money, but the pros outweigh the cons.

So how do you take advantage of it?

1. You need to refine your audience. This is often the most difficult part of the process. Finding out who your audience is by demographic and interest is the tricky part, and this is where you must be willing to make an investment.
2. Come up with a great graphic to serve as the image in your ad.

3. Tweak your ad copy to make your offering sound as attractive as possible.

But the essential point is testing. You need to constantly test and see if you are really getting the best results. Without a trial and error process you are never going to get the results you want. And so many businesses just don't get to this point.

The number one tip to succeeding with paid social media advertising

Social media used to be about reaching as many people as possible. That's all changed. For example, as an accountant, you're not just going to advertise to people who need an accountant. Success with social media advertising means advertising to people who need accountants with small businesses in a specific sector. You need to drill down into your audience like never before whether you're partaking in Instagram advertising, Facebook advertising, or Twitter advertising. With that in mind you need to be willing to commit. Paid social media advertising is only going to get more expensive as time goes on.

Will you commit to social media advertising?

ABOUT RYAN KH

I'm Ryan Kh, a business graduate, aims to contribute thrilling stories on startups, small businesses & big on shining platforms.
- Geo-targeting tips digital marketers must follow - 2 May 2017
- Why your social media marketing strategy isn't taking off - 3 Apr 2017
- What the rise of paid social media advertising means for you - 24 Jan 2017
- Is marketing automation limiting your brand's visibility? - 6 Jan 2017

View my profile and articles...