

TalkTalk Increases Reach and Lowers CPA With DoubleClick

The TalkTalk Telecom Group, which started out as a subsidiary of a specialty cell phone retailer, has used a smart, scrappy approach to attract one of the U.K.'s largest broadband and voice customer bases with a 20 % market share.

Early on, the company showed it had the skill and the will when it co-opted its largest competitor's slogan, "It's good to talk," by adding "but it's better to TalkTalk."

"With the likes of Sky, Virgin and BT as competitors, we are definitely a challenger brand," says Mark Squires, online marketing manager of Display and Technology at TalkTalk. "We are going for market share and we don't have the same levels of overall marketing spend, so we have to maximize every pound."

When TalkTalk decided to start offering TV alongside its broadband, phone and mobile services, it came out fighting. One of the company's finest moves was to shift its display strategy away from ad networks and to instead opt for programmatic marketing campaigns enabled by the DoubleClick Digital Marketing platform.

"We always made the assumption that adding mobile inventory would increase our costs, but it has done the opposite. Using DoubleClick Bid Manager and DoubleClick Rich Media, we've seen fruitful results, and now we are actively targeting mobile."

—Mark Squires, Online Marketing Manager Display/Technology,
TalkTalk Telecom Group

HTML5 delivers a surprise right hook to Flash

TalkTalk's programmatic exchange buying began as a small test with DoubleClick in 2011, when Squires was working for TalkTalk's media agency, mSix. At that point, display advertising represented only 7% of the telecom's online sales. It didn't take long for those results to change.

By late 2013, the success of programmatic buying through DoubleClick Bid Manager led to a massive shift in TalkTalk's marketing mix. Display advertising now represented 27% of the company's online sales volume.

TalkTalk

● www.talktalkgroup.com

- One of the U.K.'s largest telecom companies
- Headquartered in London with offices throughout the U.K.
- 2,500+ employees

Goals

- Maximize every pound in the marketing budget
- Keep the CPA in balance while serving dynamic vouchering campaigns to a new audience on mobile devices
- Decrease the rate of costly, ineffective GIF backup images

Approach

- Experiment with a mixed-mode campaign created on Google Web Designer
- Use Flash backed up by HTML5 to ease the switch to HTML5-only campaigns

Results

- Backup images have decreased from 7% to 0.5%
- HTML5 outperforms Flash so convincingly that marketers switched to an HTML5-only approach
- HTML5 campaigns increase reach by adding mobile inventory yet decrease overall eCPA by 12%
- Process 50% faster because designers can create ads without

● www.22design.co.uk

Squires says display has proven to be particularly important in upselling to existing customers.

“One of the areas I’m really proud of at the moment is the way we re-engage our existing customers and keep them excited. Display is now driving over 58% of our product upgrade volumes, which is crazy,” he says.

Squires adds that the company is keen to future-proof the display channel and thereby further ensure the best return for each pound it spends. Some of the strategies it has implemented in partnership with DoubleClick include first-party data integrations, single retargeting technology, HTML5 creatives and device-agnostic buying.

Indeed, the implementation of HTML5 creatives and device-agnostic buying didn’t take long to show positive results.

With the lack of Flash support on mobile browsers and applications, the company had been excluding smartphones and tablets from DoubleClick Bid Manager’s delivery because the backup GIFs that showed up on these devices were thought to have a negative effect on TalkTalk’s branding and on the performance of the ads. Support of Flash was also falling across desktop browsers, and in the course of one month, TalkTalk saw the prevalence of backup images being served across all display increase from 3% to 7%.

Aside from the obvious aesthetic problems with static GIFs, an additional concern was that as a power user of DoubleClick Rich Media’s dynamic features, elements such as offer details would display incorrectly or not at all.

The solution? Switch to HTML5 with Google Web Designer.

Google Web Designer ushers in a whole new round of winning HTML5 results

“When it was suggested we try Google Web Designer, we jumped at the opportunity,” says David Morgan, director at 22Design, TalkTalk’s creative agency.

Google Web Designer is a tool that enables designers and developers to create engaging, interactive HTML5 ads that run on any device.

The one hesitation, Morgan says, was the question of whether the agency could achieve the same quality of ads in HTML5 as in Flash.

So, rather than switching wholesale, 22Design created a “mixed mode” campaign, meaning each Flash ad had not only had a backup image, but also an HTML5 version. By serving the HTML5 version instead of the static backup image when Flash wasn’t compatible, TalkTalk could maintain the rich interaction and dynamic messaging in its creative, even across mobile devices.

The immediate effect was that the volume of backup GIFs being served dropped from 7% to 0.5%.

But there was an even more surprising result.

“We thought the HTML5 files wouldn’t be served much and that Flash would outperform them, but the results that came back were totally opposite,” says Morgan. “The HTML5 conversion figures, not just the click-through rates, were so much more attractive that we produced our next campaign entirely in HTML5.”

Once the designers made the switch to a full HTML5 campaign, the effective cost per action (eCPA) for smartphones and tablets came in at half the cost for desktop computers. This reduced the overall eCPA by 12%.

“We are thrilled by this unexpected result. The use of HTML5 through Google Web Designer and DoubleClick Studio has enabled a device-agnostic buying strategy through DoubleClick Bid Manager that has resulted in superior performance,” says Squires.

Switch to Google Web Designer 50% faster than expected

When 22Design’s Morgan made the switch to Google Web Designer, he anticipated it would take two months to get the first test creative fit for use. But he was surprised by how easy the tool turned out to be—it took only two weeks from downloading the program to getting those first test ads to go live because his team was able to learn the tool so quickly.

“I think this was astounding; great news for us,” says Morgan.

He’s also found time savings in using Google Web Designer to build out TalkTalk’s HTML5-only campaigns. Because Google Web Designer doesn’t require any coding and the design tools are intuitive, he has streamlined the development process.

“It used to be that after doing the storyboards and having them approved, the designer would sit with a programmer to create an animation sequence,” says Morgan. “Now designers can use the same files they’ve used to storyboard in Google Web Designer to produce the animation sequence themselves.”

Campaign creation and management on the same team

Another bonus with the DoubleClick solution is having campaign creation and real-time bidding all on one platform.

TalkTalk’s Squires appreciates that he can quickly look up which creative is live and which is still in QA. He can also see how different creatives link and tie in with different audiences.

The benefits of this streamlined workflow also extend to DoubleClick’s support team.

“The support we’ve had from DoubleClick and the trust we’ve enjoyed from TalkTalk have created a cross-pollination of ideas. We’ve done some really innovative things together,” says Morgan. “We are big fans of DoubleClick, and we constantly try to get people to switch over because it makes our lives so much easier.”

About DoubleClick Bid Manager

DoubleClick™ Bid Manager is a next-generation demand-side-platform (DSP) providing technology and services to trading desks, agencies and advertisers. Bid Manager brings greater control, transparency and performance in global display media buying across ad exchanges in real-time. Proprietary machine learning algorithms analyze every impression and optimize bids in real time to meet advertisers’ unique business objectives. The customizable system offers best-in-class keyword contextual targeting plus robust audience targeting through first- and third-party data, bringing the right messages to people at the right moments. Backed by Google’s global infrastructure and fully integrated into the DoubleClick platform, Bid Manager is built to work seamlessly with DoubleClick Digital Marketing, streamlining workflows and reporting and enabling true cross-channel buying across search, display, mobile and video.

Squires agrees and says the great results reaped by the HTML5 campaigns will only get more exciting.

“We always made the assumption that adding mobile inventory would increase our costs, but it has done the opposite. Using DoubleClick Bid Manager and DoubleClick Rich Media, we’ve seen fruitful results, and now we are actively targeting mobile,” he says.

TalkTalk will soon release its mobile-optimized site. With a customer journey completely tailored for mobile users, this telecom group will continue to punch above its weight.

About Google Web Designer

Google Web Designer is a free, professional-grade HTML5 authoring tool that allows creative designers and developers to easily build robust HTML5 content. The intuitive design tools in the design view allows people without coding skills to build fully-fledged HTML5 content, while the open code view gives developers with the coding capabilities granular control and flexibility to edit their content how they see fit.