

Inside Google marketing: Meeting video viewers where they are in 2018

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TV isn't what it used to be. In addition to traditional broadcast TV, people now watch content on demand and across devices, so marketers need to advertise on all of these platforms and streams to reach their audiences.

Fortunately, where there is change, there is opportunity. As video programming moves from airwaves, cables, and satellites to internet-connected devices, new technologies give advertisers access to rich data sets that allow for more precise and effective messaging. Industry experts agree that using internet technology and data to reach audiences with video, a technique broadly referred to as advanced TV, is the future of advertising.

However, according to new research from [Harvard Business Review Analytic Services](#), the opportunity in advanced TV remains largely untapped—and even unknown—by marketers.

As a product marketing manager for video at DoubleClick, my role requires constant study of how marketers are thinking about the evolution of viewing trends and how they are planning to respond. With a new year upon us, I wanted to learn how the Google Media Lab team, which manages the media strategy for all of Google's advertising campaigns, is approaching digital video in 2018. I sat down with Bob Arnold, digital media & strategy lead at Google, to understand the Media Lab's approach for using data and technology to improve audience reach across their brand campaigns.

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Digital video provides us with extremely valuable—and virtually immediate—viewership data that we can review and use for more refined and targeted messaging.

Becky Chappell: How much are consumer TV and video viewing trends impacting Google’s marketing strategies in 2018?

Bob Arnold: Consumer viewing trends are having a massive impact. In the world of TV, the biggest trend is cord cutting. Consumers now have the flexibility to watch their favorite programming at any time. The popularity of smartphones along with faster internet connections has made video the main form of media consumption and messaging around the world. So to be a part of this trend, we’re focused on providing video ads to viewers who are away from their TVs.

Right. A lot more time is now spent watching video online. But that means there are so many marketing channels. How do you think about all the different touch points when building out your campaigns?

It can feel overwhelming but the key is just to embrace it. Now, in addition to a standard 15- or 30-second TV spot, we’ll build video ads that are specifically formatted for the screen and content they show up on. For example, 6-second ads are great for mobile devices where viewers tend to have shorter attention spans. And out-stream video ads provide reach to high-quality audiences who are using mobile apps or browsing non-video content.

Another thing we think about is moving people down the funnel with coordinated campaigns across all of these ads. So, for example, we’ll build a 30- or 60-second anthem spot for TV that introduces our brand and drives awareness. We’ll then repurpose this spot for broader reach across digital channels. After that, we’ll create 6-second spots, out-stream

ads, and even display ads to enforce our brand message, build reach, and pinpoint certain benefits or messages.

These formats and placements require different creative strategies since they are shorter and often play automatically without sound. But they serve to spread our brand message across a broader set of touchpoints.

How do you know what messages to use and where to put them? What data do you use to understand your audience mindset?

We use [Google Trends](#), [Brand Lift](#), and creative message testing to help us figure out what messages to promote and what channels are working.

Google Trends helps us understand what viewers care about right at this very moment. That's really useful for us because Google's products tend to launch quickly so we need to follow up fast with new campaigns and messaging. Google Trends also provides real-time insights into what people around the world are searching for. What's great about this is that we can get up-to-the-moment insights and, unlike a focus group or survey, we are able to get these insights fast. These insights are critical to helping us build out creative and media briefs in addition to informing creative messaging and audience targeting parameters.

How is Brand Lift incorporated into your strategy?

We use Brand Lift to understand the immediate impact our ads have on brand interest, by looking at organic searches on both Google and YouTube. Rather than simply looking at metrics like viewability (for digital ads) or reach (for TV), we can actually understand the impact that different ads had across our campaign by measuring the change in volume of searches for our brand after our ad airs.

After that, we can reallocate our remaining budget to focus on the channels and the specific spots that are performing the best.

The third thing we use for every campaign is creative testing. The rising popularity of internet-enabled video viewing is great for us because it means more channels that provide instant feedback. That, in turn, helps us build more precise ad testing and creative messaging.

Interesting. Can you tell us more about how you do creative testing?

We always run rigorous A/B tests with our ad creative. This means we test and control the data at the impression level and “slice and dice” as needed. The real trick here is to properly identify and compare each ad impression with its respective lower-funnel conversion to see what’s most effective.

At Google, we’ve actually made testing mandatory for all digital campaigns, and we’ve even created a scorecard that shares those test results with team leaders throughout our marketing org. The scorecard weighs certain criteria for creative messaging, and if something doesn’t pass a test, it’s either discarded or retooled.

Appealing to everyone these days usually means ending up with a generic spot. This is the age of customization and individually targeted messaging.

Why is this testing so beneficial? What does it do for your campaigns?

Most marketing professionals realize the potential that digital affords for better and more granular control of their messages. But many of these professionals are still, at heart, mass marketers. Their creative instinct is to create ads that appeal to everyone. But, honestly, appealing to everyone these days usually means ending up with a generic spot. This is the age of customization and individual messaging.

The key is to create messaging that gets people excited about your brand and products and then customize it by device, format, and content so that it always feels relevant.

What do you see as the biggest opportunity in the space?

In my opinion, there is a big opportunity to integrate the data and measurement systems for connected TV devices (like Chromecasts and video game consoles) into the standard protocols we use for other digital channels. Today, we have standards for data and measurement for video ads on desktop, smartphone, and tablet devices. But we aren't yet able to bring the same metrics to video ads that are bought on connected devices.

Because of this discrepancy in data and measurement systems, we aren't investing in connected TV advertising at a rate to match the share of time spent viewing there. I think this is an area where further development and alignment can help open up this new channel more broadly and help us reach audiences where they are choosing to watch.

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