



**CONSUMER
ACQUISITION**
MOBILE APP ADVERTISING

**THE DEFINITIVE
GUIDE FOR
FACEBOOK
ADVERTISING
BEST PRACTICES
IN 2018**

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What Changed in Facebook's Algorithm and What is the Impact to SaaS Bidding Platforms?

For many advertisers, Facebook offers the highest volume and quality source of advertising traffic. Fully capitalizing on the potential of the Facebook platform requires heavy testing and, more importantly, continually adapting to changes in Facebook's advertising strategies and algorithm. Over the past few years, Facebook has ramped up the frequency of advertising product changes, and top advertisers have followed suit by ramping up the frequency of strategy changes. Looking back historically, the strategy we deploy today is very different than the strategy we deployed six months ago. Interestingly, this statement would hold true for any backward-looking period of time over the past five years. Put simply, our strategy is always changing to keep up with Facebook.

Because Facebook's product and our advertising strategies both change rapidly, our recommendations for best practices are frequently updated. The following in-depth guide to best practices should be considered a snapshot in time that is certain to change over time. Additionally, it's important to understand that each advertiser is unique, and there isn't a universal strategy that would be optimal for each advertiser. For instance, we're seeing tremendous success with Facebook's value optimization option, but we have clients that perform better with conversion optimization rather than value optimization. We recommend running A|B tests for each of our recommended best practices versus just accepting them as the best option for managing your unique business may vary.

With the above context, over the past several years, machine learning on platforms like Facebook and Google have reduced the level of effort needed by advertisers to manage and optimize their ad targeting, bids and budgets. As their algorithm changes, user acquisition strategy must also adapt. Over the past two years, their systems have evolved from bidding for impressions, to clicks, to installs, to events (purchase), to value. This shift has improved the quality of traffic and simplified the ad buying process. Additional improvements have been made in using broad audiences (no targeting) and the introduction of native rules inside Facebook's Power Editor and user interface (UI) changes to improve traffic quality and simplify ad buying. As automation and AI level the playing field between large and small advertisers, they have also simplified the work required to maintain performance, using fewer, less trained user acquisition human resources.

As a recent example, Facebook's algorithm changed in the middle of February 2018, and it now rewards advertisers who adhere to their best practices. This affected the strategy for user acquisition managers who may have previously relied on trying to game the Facebook algorithm or develop their own proprietary AI systems outside of Facebook, and the impact of these changes was felt industry-wide. Previously, Facebook did not penalize advertisers for using a ad buying strategy that required a high volume of ads with significant overlapping audiences that frequently made intraday changes to bids, budgets and pausing of ads.

As of mid-February, this all changed with the introduction of a penalty for significant edits and rewards for adhering to Facebook’s published best practices, outlined in their “Blueprint Certification” online training and highlighted in this video. Facebook media buying strategies have shifted and now benefit by using a low number of campaigns with limited audience overlap, leveraging broad targeting, automatic placements, and much fewer intraday changes to ads. But most importantly, an ad’s performance does much better when it is allowed to complete their learning phase and move into the optimized phase, which typically requires 50 conversions per ad set, per week.

Now that Facebook’s optimization has been radically simplified, ad creative has become the primary differentiator for advertising performance. As with most display networks, ad creative rapidly fatigues with increased spend and audience reach. The more you spend, the larger the audience you target, the faster your ads’ performance will erode. Advertisers are now shifting their focus and resources away from manual bidding adjustments towards creative strategy, production and optimization. Cutting-edge user acquisition experts have realized that maximizing return on ad spend (ROAS) is more efficiently achieved through creative optimization and testing.



Campaigns Structure: Geography & Type of Bidding

The Facebook best practice for campaign structure is to minimize the number of campaigns in the account. This can be accomplished by the creation campaigns tied to a geography and type of bidding. For example, common campaigns will target the United States with a bidding objective of App Event Optimization (AEO), such as a purchase or registration, or use Value Optimization Bidding to target high-value payers versus those only willing to pay \$0.99.

Many Ad Sets Per Campaign to Minimize Audience Overlap for Testing

Once you have minimized the number of campaigns being used, you will create ad sets that target specific audiences that does not overlap with other ad sets. Following this structure will allow you to efficiently put up to 20 ads per ad set, drive minimum auction competition and efficiently enable one of Facebook's most compelling new newest features, Campaign Budget Optimization (CBO).

Until CBO became available, advertisers were required have to spend hours manipulating budgets to make sure budget was spent on the best performing ad sets. With the launch of CBO, Facebook automatically re-allocates budget without human intervention to the most efficient ad set.

An important byproduct of this innovation is its impact on the broader Facebook ad tech ecosystem. In our opinion, Facebook has rendered unnecessary the external third party SaaS and self-service platforms that are based on proprietary rules or "black box "artificial intelligence. To put it simply, the Facebook's native tools are now more efficient at bidding and budgeting than third party solutions, and they are free. Having said that, they could improve capabilities with ad building and reporting, and neither Facebook or Google's native tools offers solutions that span across social ad networks (i.e. Facebook, Instagram, Snap, Pinterest, etc).



Many Ads Per Ad Set and Creative Variations

By keeping within the best practice structure of account, campaign, ad set and ad, Facebook will run your ads in a "learning phase," which can graduate to the "optimized phase" for more efficient results. Typically it takes 50 conversions per ad set per week to graduate from learning into optimized

It's important that you do not have multiple ad sets with the same campaign objective and bid type with overlapping audiences; however, it's unclear if there's an ideal volume of ad sets per campaign and how budget influences the decision. A higher volume of ad sets will divide the CBO campaign budget by more ad sets and usually will cause a lower average spend per ad set. By increasing the volume of ad sets, you may be able to lower the cost per acquisition (CPA) and return on advertising spend (ROAS), unless Facebook biases an individual set ad, which it does from time-to-time.

As we understand the current algorithm, significant edits to budgets occur with changes over 40% and to bids with changes greater than 30%. Modifications beyond these thresholds will force ad sets out of optimized phase and back into learning phase, and will result in increased CMPs and less efficient spend.

The maximum number of ads per ad set is 20. Each ad should have a unique creative combination of image, video, ad copy, call to action. Determining the ideal volume of ads per ad set and how your daily or lifetime budget influences the decision is still being tested. However, we do know that a higher volume of ads allows Facebook to rotate more creative and identify potential winners across an audience, and it also reduces creative fatigue. Facebook now offers asset customization so you can specify creative formats to a given placement, and this will further help Facebook optimize with the right ad to the right audience and placement.

Open Question: How often should you add new creative to existing ad sets? Do you risk significant edits for top ad sets by introducing new ads?

- Today the API does not have variables to help you understand ad fatigue.
- We recommend you look at first time impression ratio, cumulative reach, CTR and audience reach as proxies for fatigue.

Country (U.S.)



Advertisers can focus much less attention on intraday bid and budget changes. Instead, they can take full advantage of Facebook's automation features.

Here are Facebook's most recent innovations and tools for advertising:

Auto Bidding, App Events, and Value Bidding

When you advertise with Facebook, ideally you want to build campaigns that drive positive ROAS. With a click, you can now have Facebook perform all bid changes for you in real-time. Their algorithm has gotten very efficient at delivering results. To deliver this efficiency, Facebook's new algorithm allows you to train it on which people are most valuable to your business.

Beyond the install, App Event Optimization (AEO) allows you to educate Facebook on the value of key events, like purchase or registration, and they will optimize your ads to deliver people who are most likely to take those actions. Although, not all people who purchase a product or service are hold the same value for an advertiser. As such, Facebook has also enabled value-based bidding that allows advertisers to send the real values of each user into the Facebook algorithm and they will in turn find similar high-value people.

Auto Placement: Right Ad, Right Audience, Right Time and Right Device

Dynamic creative optimization (DCO) selects the best elements to put into an ad based on audience segments and real-time feedback prior to the ad being served. The concept is simply -- right ad, right copyright audience, right time, right language and right device. Since algorithmically-driven creative is tested and optimized against an advertiser's goals, dynamic ads typically outperform their static counterparts. DCO also works well in conjunction with value-based lookalike audiences to match the right ads with the highest value users for marketers. Further, DCO offers both creative delivery at scale as well as testing with endless experimentation, all without human intervention required to drive continuous testing and optimization. It's also possible to enable language testing through DCO to deliver the most efficient language based on performance.

Auto Audiences: Lookalike Audiences and Custom Audiences for Highest Value & LTV

You can create value-based lookalike audiences on Facebook, which are users who behave similarly to past paying customers based on their value. You can denote a value for different types of paying customers (high spenders, medium, low spenders), and by creating these custom seed audiences on Facebook, the platform can then target new users that look like and match the respective value of the custom audience.

Auto Budget: Campaign Budget Optimization (CBO) Renders Bidding Tools Less Effective

Machine learning can analyze and process vastly more data in real time than an army of UA managers. Just like automatic bidding, overall ad budgets can be automated to increase and decrease based on performance metrics and rules set by marketers in real-time, around the clock. By allowing the algorithms to automatically budgets, advertisers get increased performance with decreased need for human intervention.

Over 300 parameters to test, here's a few...

Facebook Product Best Practices - when to use or avoid?

Dynamic Creative Optimization (DCO)	Vs	no Dynamic Creative Optimization
Campaign Budget Optimization (CBO)	Vs	no Campaign Budget Optimization
Dynamic Language Optimization (DLO)	Vs	no Dynamic Language Optimization
Value Optimization (VO)	Vs	AEO
All placement	Vs	Selective placements
Daily	Vs	Lifetime Budgets

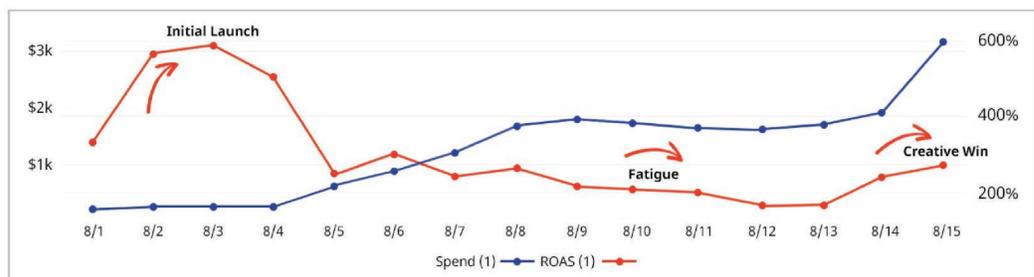
Data To Evaluate

- Does first time impression ratio matter?
- Cumulative reach?
- Audience reached ratio?

Why Creative Matters: How Machine Learning and Artificial Intelligence Simplified User Acquisition for Facebook & Google UAC

As Facebook and Google UAC have automated their bidding, creative has quickly become the driver for the best financial performance. Creative can now be optimized to match the user’s experience, location and device. Video templates assist with the creation of generic creative and dynamic pricing; however, non-templated creative cannot be generated with AI or machine learning...yet!

This begs the question, how much creative do you need? Our experience in spending over \$150M indicated that 95% of direct response creative fails to outperform a portfolio’s best ad. Thus, a large volume of quality creative is needed to find that 5% of winning creative to achieve and sustain ROAS. Since creative rapidly fatigues with increased spend and audience reach, constant creative testing is necessary to produce wins to offset fatigue.



Dynamic Creative Optimization and Split Testing

Facebook has release two new features to help determine which creative is the best. As we know, DCO selects the best elements to put into an ad based on audience segments to deliver in real-time the right ad, right copy, right audience, right time, right language, right placement and right device. Further, DCO offers both creative delivery at scale as well as testing with endless experimentation, all without human intervention required to drive continuous testing and optimization. It's also possible to enable language testing through DCO to deliver the most efficient language based on performance.

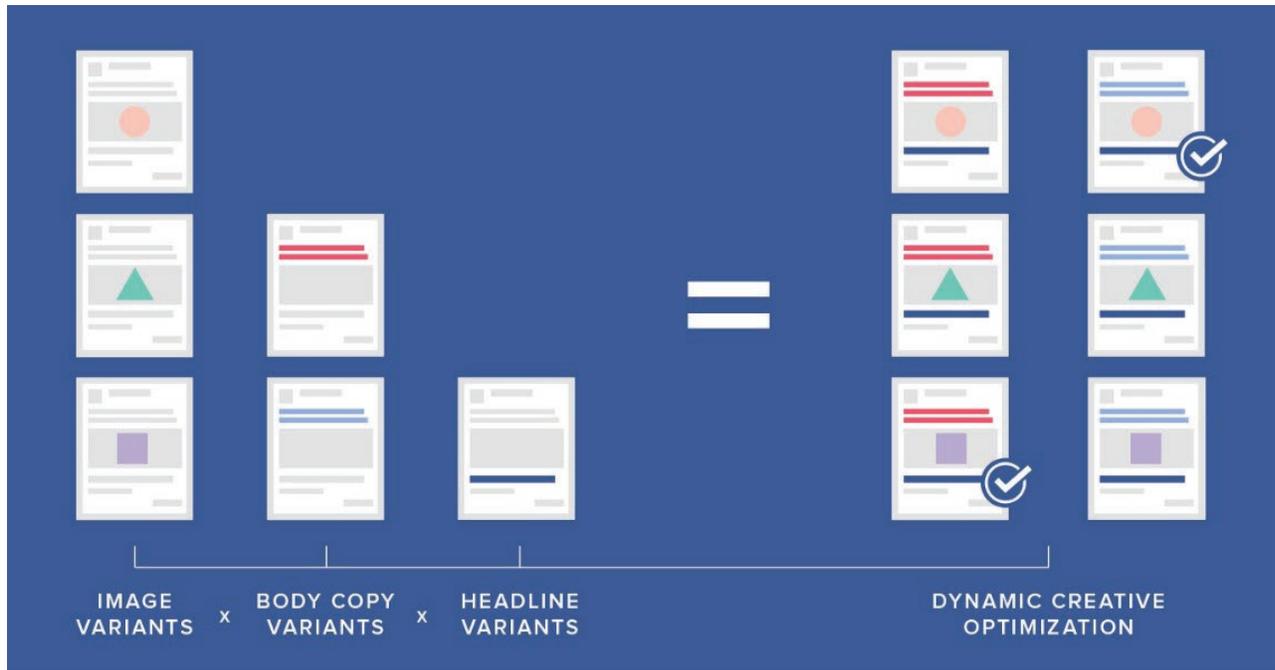
Their second innovation is a simple split test that allows advertisers to efficiently to run A|B comparisons between videos, images, ad copy, and more. The real innovation here is that Facebook will split the traffic on the back end to avoid overlap. For example, if you have an audience of 1,000,000 and you want to test five videos, Facebook will show each video to an audience of up to 200,000 people. This new feature, has radically simplified creative testing of ads for Facebook and allows for much more efficient media spend.

We recommend that you configure split tests in a dedicated campaign to eliminate the likelihood of incurring a significant to your regular structure. Once a winner is identified, you can roll it out and scale using your dedicated scale campaigns ad sets. If you are testing new audiences, and an ad set performs well, use the ad set continuously and add new ad creative over time to offset audience fatigue. If the audience does not perform, pause and abandon it.

All of your split testing should have an end date. Facebook recommends that you now use daily budgets instead of lifetime budgets. Once a winner is identified, we recommend that you pause the split test contestants and re-launch an ad set with a dedicated unique audience.

Open Question:

- When a split test ends and ads keep running, does the backend split still apply after the split test end date?
- Broad vs. LAL? Does audience matter for integrity of results or moving faster?
Note: Broad targeting carries lower CPM and lower CPI, which means you can reach 50 conversions more quickly and theoretically learn faster and with lower financial risk than running higher CPA audiences.



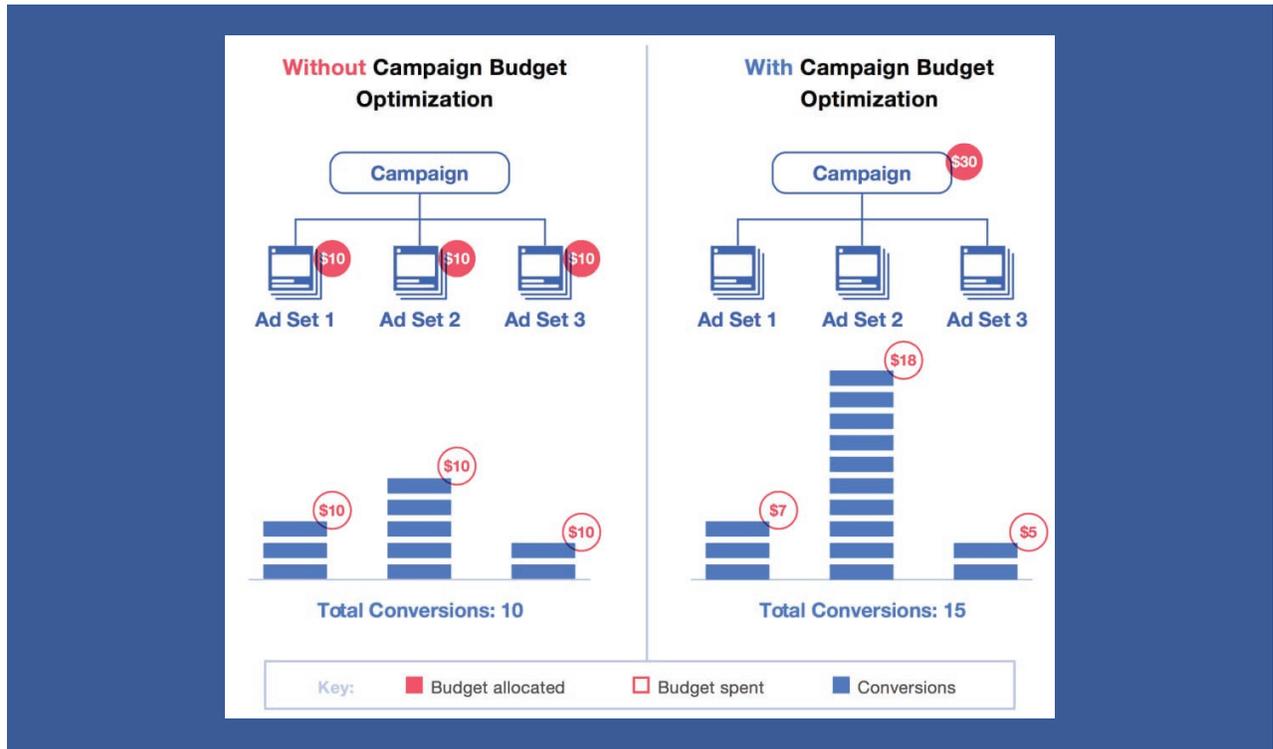
You should always be A|B testing your campaign types to reduce wasteful ad spend:

Campaign Budget Optimization

CBO vs. non-CBO: By placing a single campaign budget and allowing Facebook to dynamically adjust ad set budgets, you give control to Facebook for budget optimization. This also allows top ad sets to scale volume without triggering a significant edit, putting less risk on high-value ad sets.

Open Question:

How do you scale CBO campaigns? If you edit campaign budget and trigger a significant edit, is it more efficient to just launch a new CBO campaign to avoid risk of significant edits?



Dynamic Language Optimization (DLO)

DLO vs. non-DLO: DLO is particularly useful for targeting multilingual audiences in a single location. By allowing Facebook to determine which ad and which language to serve, you hand more control to Facebook to surface the winning ads automatically.

It's important to note that DLO performance seems to fluctuate significantly and it is possible that non-DLO ads can outperform DLO ads during any given month. In general, language targeting requires continual testing with a focus on refreshing copy, creative, and audience. Also, country targeting appears to make a significant difference. For example, targeting worldwide French speakers may produce different results compared to targeting French speakers in France, Canada, etc., and vice versa.

Open Question:

If you run DLC, you can not also run DCO at the same time. Does the value of DLO outweigh the value of DCO, plus multiple creative variations?

Dynamic Creative Optimization (DCO)

DCO vs. non-DCO: DCO automatically optimizes ad creative based on multivariate testing. By running DCO, Facebook has control over which creative is served and can more quickly optimize a high volume of creative combinations versus just running many ads per ad set.

Open Question:

Is DCO a more efficient form for A|B testing new creative versus split testing? Is there more value in Facebook quickly finding the top creative combination with DCO versus getting even impression splits and backend audience overlap prevention from the A|B testing feature?

Split Testing

Split Testing vs. CBO vs. Neither: Use split testing for creative, audience and placement testing to optimize your campaigns.

Open Question:

When a split test "ends" and ads keep running, does the backend split remain or does each ad set now have access to the entire population? Is it better to test within CBO and not use split testing so that it's easier to scale winners from split testing? And, if testing directly on CBO, launching ads in the existing campaign will cause a significant edit, something to keep in mind.

Campaign Optimization Best Practices

A|B Test MAI vs. AEO vs. VO: MAI is ideal for brand new accounts in order to build up conversion history. After MAI, you should transition to App Event (AEO) and Value (VO) bidding. For new accounts, VO will not initially be available until you have enough AEO optimization data. AEO needs slightly higher quality audiences than VO, while VO needs broad audiences. VO is a more finite audience than AEO, and will reach audience saturation more quickly. VO should be more efficient for new audiences and new creative, and AEO may be more efficient for you as the VO audience pool becomes oversaturated. As a bit of context, on average, we've seen AEO is 2-3X the cost of a mobile app install and VO is 2-3X the cost AEO.

Open Question:

Is there value in running multiple bid structures in case some burn out or perform differently as the marketplace or algorithm changes? For instance, if AEO underperforms versus VO, should you allow X% of spend on AEO in case it starts performing better?

- In our experience, you'll need to have both bid types setup in unique campaigns and be prepared to move budget between AEO and VO

Guidance to Maximize Your Bids & Budget Spend

Test Different Bidding Structures: Automatic bids focus on lowest cost, while manual bidding gives you more control over your CPA to stay within your target cost. You can test both of these bidding models depending on the ads you're running. VO is auto only, while you may find that AEO is better for manual bidding. Stay tuned as VO manual bidding will be coming soon for Facebook advertisers.

Reducing Wasteful Ad Spend

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Open Question:

We recommend you test bid types with and without auto bidding. Manual bidding will require manual bid adjustments to maintain scale, which may trigger significant edits if you change more than 30%, but it can be more efficient in certain circumstances.

- **MAI** - auto and manual bid both available
- **AEO** - auto and manual bid both available
- **VO** - auto bid is the only current option, but manual bid is in beta and coming soon

Reducing Wasteful Ad Spend

Increase Your Bid Amounts Incrementally to Find the Sweet Spot: Higher bids will give you more access to high quality inventory, so try bidding high to capture paying users on AEO. Test a 10% change on your bids. If no significant edit was triggered, make a 20% change. Incrementally increase your bid until you find the tipping point. You can run this test on small and big budgets separately because smaller budgets will absorb a greater percent change without triggering the significant edit.

Pausing Ads / Ad Sets: Campaigns, ad sets and ads should never be paused if you intend to spend additional money with them in the future. Any pause is considered a significant edit and restarts the learning phase.

Audience and Placement Targeting: When running AEO or VO bidding, it's a Facebook best practice to run both broad targeting with all placements and auto bidding. This allows Facebook to dynamically adjust bids and find the right audience regardless of the product they are using.

Open Question:

We recommend you test different audience types with different bid types to maximize reach while hitting financial goals. Here are the Facebook best practices:

- **MAI** – lookalike audiences
- **AEO** – interests with wide open age targeting 18-64+ (testing required to determine if targeting expansion is helpful)
- **VO** – broad audiences to maximize reach, use wide open age targeting 18-64+

Manage Your Daily Spend Effectively: To land at the desired daily spend level without pausing your budget or triggering a significant edit, you can utilize CBO and set the desired daily budget at the campaign levels, or set auto bidding. This ensures all your daily budget will be spent.

Starting Budget Recommendations for Ad Sets for Non-CBO Campaigns: Brand new accounts with no existing historical data should use a multi-ad structure. At least 2-3 ads minimum to start, within a single ad set, with budgets set at \$100-\$200 for the entire ad set.

Reducing Wasteful Ad Spend

Existing accounts with sufficient historical data should use a multi-ad structure with higher budgets (>\$200 for entire ad set). There is an obvious advantage to launching non-CBO ads with existing historical data because you already have a general sense of which ads work and do not work.

Best Practices for Scaling Volume: You can safely continue scaling an existing CBO budget after all ads have completed the learning phase, but there's a spend threshold where ROAS will be impacted and you will have to either: (1) launch new audiences under new ad sets within the same campaign, or (2) launch new ads within the existing ad sets.

Campaign	# Ad Sets	Budget	Average Budget Per Ad Set
iOS US VO CBO	10	\$500.00	\$50.00
iOS US AEO Purchase CBO	10	\$350.00	\$35.00
iOS US VO CBO - Wide LALs	10	\$250.00	\$25.00
iOS US VO Purchase Split Tests	5	\$75.00	\$15.00

Best Practices for Significant Edits: You'll have a positive impact on your campaigns if you make significant edits when pushing a new ad and re-setting the learning phase, or if you're deleting a negative ad to avoid it counting towards your history.

Additionally, if you build up negative history with an ad that stops performing well, you would benefit from the significant edit. It also makes sense to pause an ad and re-launch if it performed well and then stopped performing well at some point.

Creative Marketplaces

Creative marketplaces are an efficient way to benchmark internal teams and get new creative strategies, production and optimization of concepts and variations at scale. They will help you alleviate the tunnel vision of existing design teams.

What is a creative marketplace? It's a crowdsourcing platform to generate creative at scale. A short creative brief is written and editors and designers submit creatives based on the creative brief. Advertisers provide feedback for revisions or approves the creative. Once approved, the ad can be launched into the social ad channel or downloaded for future use. Creative analytics enables automatic detection, classification and swapping of underperforming ads.

When a winner is provided from the marketplace, variations can easily be generated by an internal team. This will help the internal team get an influx of new ideas from across the Facebook and Instagram ecosystem. In fact, if you work with the right marketplace, they will follow the best practices for each social channel where they are running media (Facebook, Instagram, Snap, Pinterest, IAB, etc.).

Your ad creative rapidly fatigues with increased spend and audience reach, thus, a much larger volume of quality creative will be essential to achieve and sustain ROAS as you scale and grow. Constant creative testing is necessary to produce wins and offset fatigue.

Here are highly effective ways to run your creative program:

Creative Briefs & Testing Process

■ Learning Phase: Leverage Best Existing Media, Generate Prototype Ads & Iterate:

● Phase 0: Competitive Analysis

- Conduct a creative audit by evaluating your top 10 competitor ads on Facebook, this is free to do.to conduct to do a creative audit.
- Update monthly with fresh ads

- **Phase 1: Minimize financial risk and limit non-converting spend by testing 2 Variations of top 3 videos / images / carousels (Prototype Ads!)**

- Start with your best creative & add new elements to maximize the odds of success while limiting non-converting spend
- Text Headers: Call-To-Actions & Placement, Short/Long, Color, Font
- Image Format (Square, Horizontal, Vertical, Stories)
- Video Length tests 6, 10, 15 seconds, etc.

- **Phase 2: Pick 2 top performing creatives and do 4 variations (Prototype Ads!)**

- CTAs: Start & End Screen
- Use of Primary Colors
- Mobile Device vs. No Mobile Device
- Text in Image/Video (non-header)
- Background Images
- Image Layout (Split Screen, Grid, Horizontal, Vertical)
- Types of Images (User Generated vs. Stock Photos)
- One Product vs. Multiple Products
- Apple Store/Play Store Badge
- Logos & Brand Placement

- **Phase 3: Work to understand the audience and messaging by generate 2 Create To Convert Videos (Prototype Ads!)**

★ Facebook's Creative Shop reviewed thousands of top performing videos and identified top performers that fall into these two main categories: Benefits in Motion & Demo in Motion.

- ▲ Demo of how phase 3 works in practice:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZjufYmsKXIU&feature=youtu.be>

- ▲ Benefits in Motion:

- Tell user what to expect and why play.
- Can be achieved quickly showing characters, levels, action, etc.
- Short ad copy to highlight benefits.

- ▲ Demo in Motion:

- Screen capture gameplay in a phone.
- Demonstrate app can be downloaded.

★ **Example: Benefit / Concept:** Message to focus on emphasize. It can be product's feature, benefit, unique positioning, etc.

- ▲ Concept 1: Safety & Trust
- ▲ Concept 2: Cost Savings
- ▲ Concept 3: Control
- ▲ Concept 4: Large supply, find right product when you need it
- ▲ Concept 5: Convenience
- ▲ ** Note: dead user reviews in the AppStore to understand user-feedback and build into ad copy plan

■ Custom Creative Concepts Based On Learnings

● Phase 4: Competitive Analysis

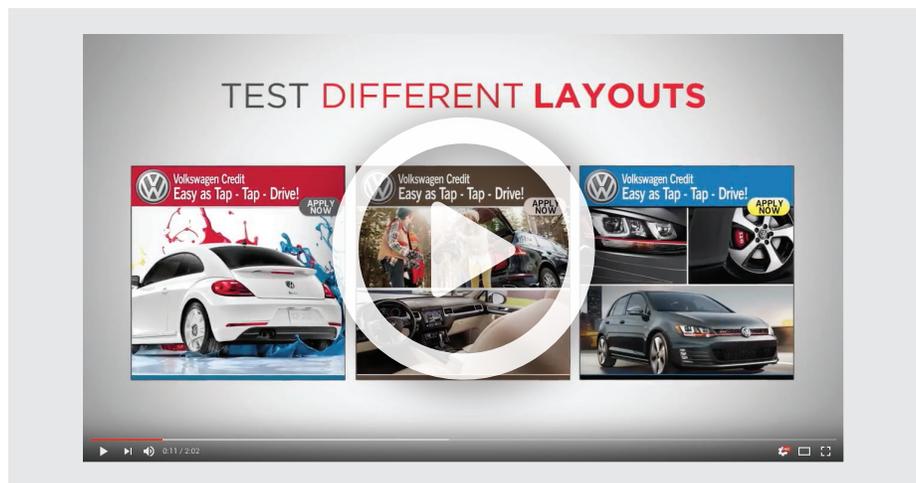
- New concepts from competitive ad concepts
- Expand on Phase 1-3 winners with new concepts
- Custom creative concepts with storytelling (like before/after concept)
- Character animation & fresh concepts from new assets
- Variations of client's new ads
- Request new assets from advertiser's design team

Creative Strategies to Extend the Life of Still Images

Getting a winning ad is difficult and you only have a 5% chance at success. Once you get a winner, there's a lot that you can do to extend its life so it continues to generate positive returns on investment. Here are just some of the ways you can keep your creative fresh through testing variations:

- **Image Formats and Layouts:** Showcase your product or service in several layouts like side-by-side, split-screen, grid (2x2, 3x3, 4x4), split screen ($\frac{1}{2}$ & $\frac{1}{2}$), split screen variation or $\frac{1}{4}$.
- **Video Length and CTAs:** Your video ads need to be in the rage of eight seconds or less. Your call to action should be in the first three seconds and it needs to be strong. Remember to tell a story - what is your app and why do people care?

- **Types of Images:** The vast majority of pictures and videos you see on Facebook are user-generated, shared by family and friends. Professional photos or stock photography can look too perfect and tend to stick out on Facebook. Consider taking your own photos or degrading the quality of the images and videos to make them appear user-generated.
- **Color Uses in Images and Headers:** Test simple and plain backgrounds with soft or blurred out colors or gradients. Allow the viewer's eyes to focus on bright vibrant foreground colors. Test soft background colors vs bold colors, strong texture vs muted texture, and simple vs clean vs busy and cluttered backgrounds.



Best Practices for Creating Videos from Still Images

Facebook's Creative Shop has reviewed thousands of top performing videos and identified 4 different flavors of videos that top ads consistently fell into: basic in motion, brand in motion, benefit in motion and demo in motion. These videos can be created with limited assets as they consist of still images and simple animations of different elements. Here's an overview of each type of video ad:

- 1.- **Basics in Motion:** A simple video or an animation. You can start from a still image and animate one or two elements of the image such as a character. You can also use music to add excitement.

- 2.- **Brand In Motion:** A video with an emphasis on your brand. Start with a still, and add excitement by animating an aspect of your brand like your logo.
- 3.- **Benefit in Motion:** A video with an emphasis on your products' benefits. Start with a still, and add excitement by animating your product's benefits with typography. Use short copy to make your video effective
- 4.- **Demo In Motion:** A video with an emphasis on how your product works. For mobile games, you can screen capture gameplay and place it inside a phone. Not a mobile game? Show a demonstration of your product.





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