



**CONSUMER
ACQUISITION**
MOBILE APP ADVERTISING

100,000 Facebook Ads Tested

HERE'S WHAT WORKS



Successful Facebook Creative

What Drives High CTR?

Rules for Great Creative

Facebook Ads That Really Work!

Social App: Why Do These Work?

Gaming: Why Do These Work?

E-Commerce: Why Do These Work?

Entertainment: Why Do These Work?

Optimizing Creative

Your Optimized Ad Died - Now What?

Ad Copy & Calls-to-Action

Headline Testing

Best Practices & Summary



Facebook & Instagram Mobile App Installs

O V E R

**42,
000,
000**

M I L L I O N

**MOBILE APP
INSTALLS
GENERATED**

A B O U T U S

Consumer Acquisition provides full-service advertising and technology for Facebook and Instagram for mobile apps.

Consumer Acquisition has acquired more than 40 million mobile app users on Facebook and Instagram. With a focus on gaming, ecommerce, automotive, financial services and entertainment verticals, we have developed a unique process to reduce costs at high scale. Our AdRules™ ad management software utilizes custom algorithms for each mobile app. AdRules™ was launched for internal use in January 2015 and is now available to advertisers in private beta.

100k Facebook Ads Tested: Here's What Works

Building high-performance Facebook, Instagram and Twitter advertising campaigns requires excellent creative and marketing choices. Choosing the right visuals, ad copy, and calls-to-action will offer you the best shot at achieving campaign performance goals. In building and running over \$260 million in campaigns for clients across multiple industries, we've learned a few things. There's a lot of hype out there about "quick, easy success on Facebook in \$3 a day." Don't buy it. Facebook marketing works extremely well for us and our clients, but we approach the process very scientifically, and we spend a lot more than \$3 a day, and, more importantly, we monitor and update our campaigns all day, every day.

It's easy to fail in Facebook marketing if you don't take the process seriously and go in with a willingness to work extremely hard, to test and refine non-stop, and to fail almost as often as you test. Across hundreds of thousands of campaigns, we've conducted countless tests, and we've learned that some ingredients to the recipe for success are critical. Keep reading to find out how to ensure your campaigns won't end in a pile of failed creative and a wasted marketing budget. While we won't give away all our secrets, we are sharing some advice that will enable you to build successful ads and outmarket the competition.



First, we'll start by talking about what won't work: yesterday's model of grabbing the megaphone and repeating the same stale message in the same way, to the same audience. Facebook offers an enormous number of targeting and optimization options, and delivering compelling creative that's relevant to your audience involves learning how to take advantage of these tools. In other words, Facebook advertising offers some powerful weapons for winning the marketing wars, but you have to know how to aim, focus, and apply these techniques.

Step one to creating a successful campaign is understanding the environment in which you're advertising: in this case, we're talking about ads in the Facebook news feed or Twitter's mobile app install ads. If you are advertising in Facebook, your ad will appear in between posts from friends and other content which is highly interesting to the audience, so gaining attention will require excellent creative. To stand out from vacation photos, cool pictures of friends and family, and other socially topical posts, Facebook ad

**100k
Facebook
Ads Tested:
Here's What
Works**

visuals must be highly compelling. Twitter posts work in the same way, and you are often competing with breaking news in that environment.



If getting the consumer's attention is not a compelling enough reason to make sure your social ads are eye-catching and well-targeted, there's another reason as well: cost. Facebook pricing is correlated to click-through rates and conversion rates. Specifically, conversion rates and clicks serve as proxies for Google-like quality scores in the Facebook bidding environment. The higher the CTR (click-through rate), the lower the cost or CPM. CTRs must be above 1.0% to drive low-cost acquisition.

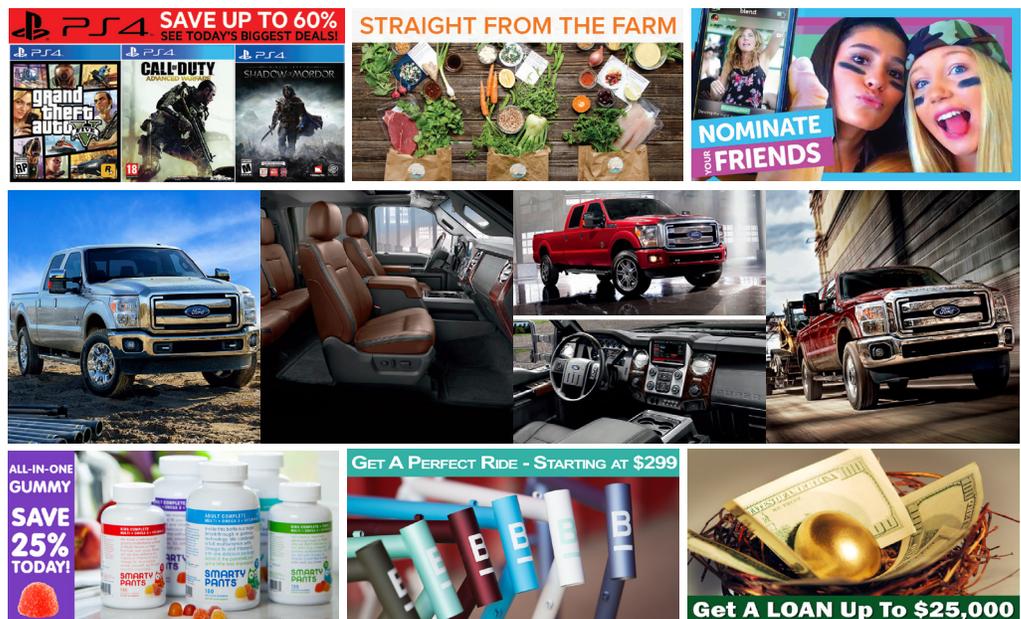


NEXT: WHAT DRIVES HIGH CTR?

What Drives High CTR?

Images are responsible for 75-90% of ad performance, so this is the first area of focus.

The process of identifying the optimal images begins, not surprisingly, with testing. We recommend initial testing of 10-15 images against one audience. Don't worry about ad copy, and keep copy the same for each image tested, so you're working on just one variable at a time. We can't emphasize this enough. You will never find out what works if you start testing multiple variables out the gate, and you'll waste a lot of time and money. Getting the right image is enough of a challenge -- don't muddy the waters so the winner isn't clearly visible. Only AFTER you have a winning image will you test copy, to drive an additional 10-25% of an ad's performance.



On Facebook, create one campaign for testing. If you have 10 images, create 10 ad sets, each with one ad and \$15 budget. This will prevent Facebook from selecting a winner too quickly. (If you were to combine all 10 images for testing in one ad set, Facebook would choose a winning image within 200-500 impressions, killing the other ads before they have had a chance to perform.) Don't be surprised if a lot of the images you test fail out the gate. That's good - that's the market giving you feedback and guiding you to the winning formula. It's the market saving you money, by quickly providing a referendum on images that won't work. We experience only a 5-10% success rate when testing images -- it takes a lot of trial and error to lock in on success.

What Drives High CTR?

Next, make sure all ads target the same audience and budget for each ad, so you can eliminate audience and budget as variables. In general, Facebook testing is more successful and accurate when you start with bigger audiences and hence more data from which to choose your targets. Once you've locked in on the right image, you can later choose to zoom in and target ads with smaller custom audiences, but for now, let's look more carefully at the impact of particular creative choices.

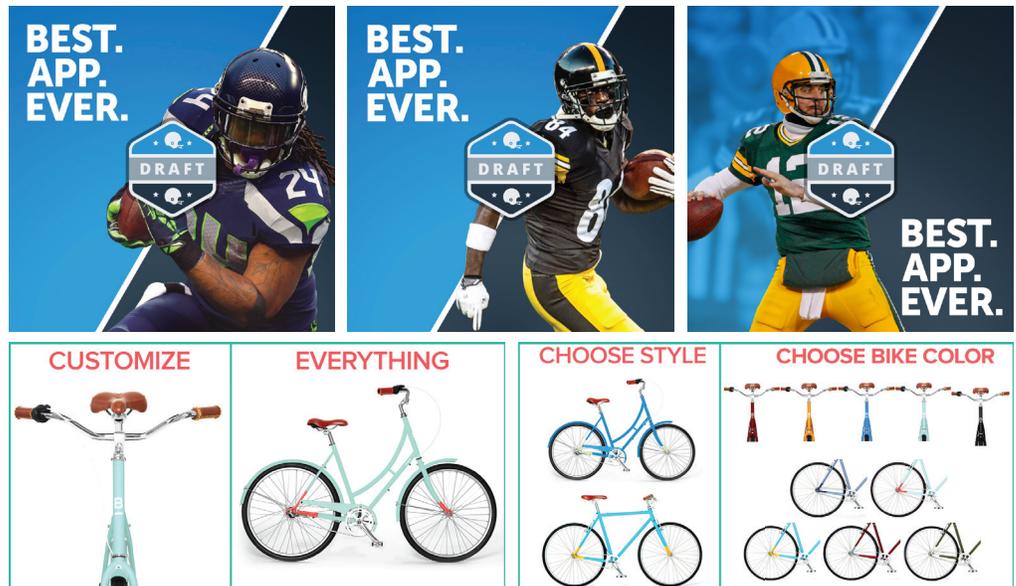


NEXT: RULES FOR GREAT CREATIVE

Rules for Great Creative

Keep it Simple: Backgrounds & Text

When it comes to Facebook ads, less is more. Too much clutter will distract the audience and take focus away from your message. Focus on clean, accessible images and copy, with no visual clutter and minimal amount of background information or images. In general, plain, blurred, or out-of-focus backgrounds work best, because those types of visuals do not draw attention to the background and keep the audience's focus on the products and messages (in the foreground). We're talking from experience here: we've tested well over 100,000 images with and without complex backgrounds, backgrounds with texture, and backgrounds with photos in them. Backgrounds in white, or featuring blurred out colors or gradients, have proven to work better than backgrounds with recognizable images. In other words, focus your customer on the bread-and-butter of your message: image and ad copy. Keep the number of words in the message to a minimum, because your audience will not take the time to read a long string of text. Games are different, as you must show game play, action, and movement.



Facebook's 20% Text Rule

According to Facebook's rules, all text, including logos, must take no more than 20% of the total ad real estate. Here is a link to [Facebook's tool to test your images](#). We can't explain why Facebook created this 20% rule, but advertisers must live with it. Due to those restrictions, text often performs best when positioned in a horizontal or vertical copy bar, with a background color that increases contrast, and, of course, strong calls-to-action. As mentioned above, keep it short and snappy. In order to focus the eye prominently on the copy in this real estate, brevity is CRITICAL.



Be Bold With Colors

Color affects performance. The best ads usually use vibrant colors, like orange, red, yellow, bright green, etc. Try to avoid using greys, blues, or blacks. (Blues tend to disappear into Facebook's background colors, and blacks and greys are considered visually recessive colors, meaning that the eye tends to ignore them.) If you must use a less eye-catching background, use a strong primary color accent. In millions of tests conducted, the most eye-catching ads in terms of colors perform the best.



Feature Prominent Branding & Use of Logos

People flick through their Facebook newsfeed very quickly, so don't make them work to recognize your brand. Feature your branding and your logos in prominent places, to make it clear who's talking to the audience. Consumers are less likely to care about your message if they don't know who "you" are. Specifically, use the largest possible recognizable logo for your brand, to the point of over-emphasis. Keep in mind that your ads, when seen on the phone, will appear in a size that is about 25% of the size in which they're designed. The smaller the logo, the harder it is to recognize. When possible, use the logo in the product, and even better if you also use it in text overlaying the image.



Entice Users With Dynamic Calls-to-Action: Ask for the Sale

Facebook and Twitter users are not hanging around seeking ads on which to click. Once you've grabbed the viewer's attention, ask for the sale! Calls-to-action represent between 10-25% of the efficiency. Of course, refinement of calls-to-action is a phase 2 effort: work on this copy after you've selected the best image and developed the main body of the ad. Don't start by focusing on the call-to-action.



Photos: Professional vs. User- Generated

User-generated photos tend to outperform professional photography! Why? Because Facebook is a user-created content environment, where users are more likely to trust ads that feel like what they're already finding in their newsfeed. In other words, successful ads feel organic. Think "selfie," not professional magazine ads. Try to mirror the selfie quality of the rest of the content in the newsfeed, with a more home-grown vibe. This is less applicable on Pinterest, where the visual quality of the postings tends to be superior.



Similarly, when it comes to photos of people, use images of people that seem attractive and accessible, but not supermodels. (Featuring people that seem like people one might meet at the grocery store helps the ad to feel authentic and trustworthy, whereas using supermodel images lends the ad the vibe of more slick "advertising.") In general, happy women and children are always a strong bet. For the most part, men like women, and so do women, and we would all prefer to relate to a happy person. Finally, take your own pictures with your phone or other camera, but, whenever possible, do NOT rely on stock photography. Stock photography usually feels too "professional" or canned and less impersonal, and it carries the additional baggage of potential legal and rights issues for commercial usage.

If you are advertising using the Facebook Audience Network "FAN," here are some additional tips. When you select the main image, keep in mind that the left and right margins of the image may be cropped and only visible when users tilt their devices. Be sure to include a "safe area" to cover for this possibility. Similarly, keep the bottom 25% of the image clear, uncluttered by text, logos, or other images. Don't place call-to-action buttons on the main image.

Starring Your Product: Less is More

Show off the product! But keep it simple. In general, it's best to feature just use one product versus multiple products, unless you're highlighting multiple versions of a simple product. Again, we find that less is more. Make it easy for the human brain to process your message quickly, and don't confuse the audience with too many choices. As mentioned above, keeping the backgrounds really clean and minimizing visual noise keeps the product and brand front and center and delivers the best results.



Facebook Ads That Really Work

Social App: Why Do These Work?

The sample ads below represent good examples of social app ads. While these ads do feature stock photography (something we tend to avoid), the photos work because they look like selfies, featuring women who look like people you might otherwise find in your newsfeed, not supermodels. In addition, the women are happy and smiling, and they're looking at the camera, which is important for women. Conversely, studies show that men should be looking away from the camera. As mentioned above, our research has shown us that men prefer ads featuring women, and so do women, so use photos of women or children. The photo example below featuring a burning building is dynamic and attention-grabbing, particularly for a Seattle-targeted ad.



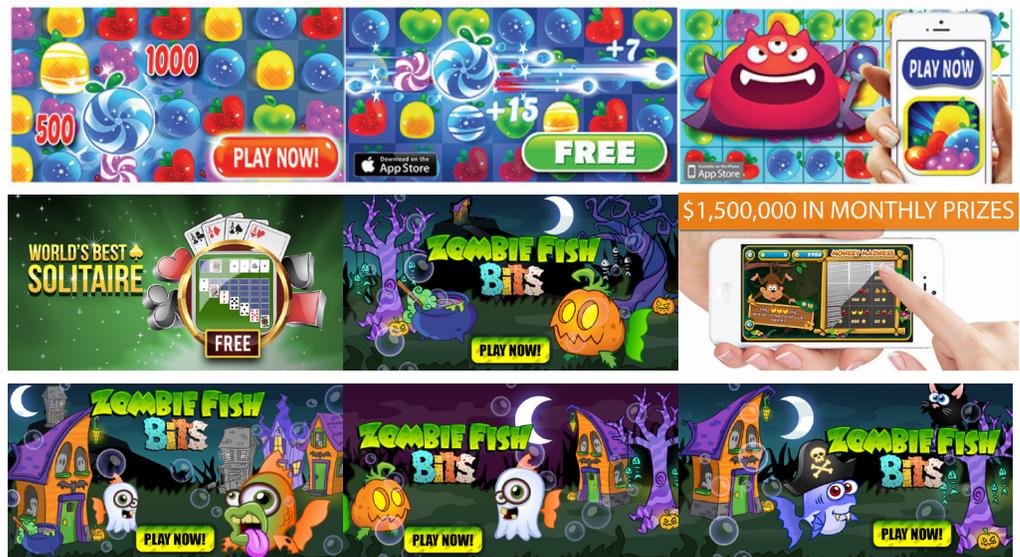
Gaming: Why Do These Work?

The karaoke (gaming) ads showcased below represent strong creative examples for this category. For starters, the backgrounds use primary colors, which grabs attention out the gate. Secondly, in testing, the bar with strong calls-to-action increased both conversion rates and click-through-rates. Finally, showing the app or game in action visually indicates how you use the app, which tells the story simply and effectively. In the three examples below, the use of recognizable song lyrics identifies this app as a karaoke app.



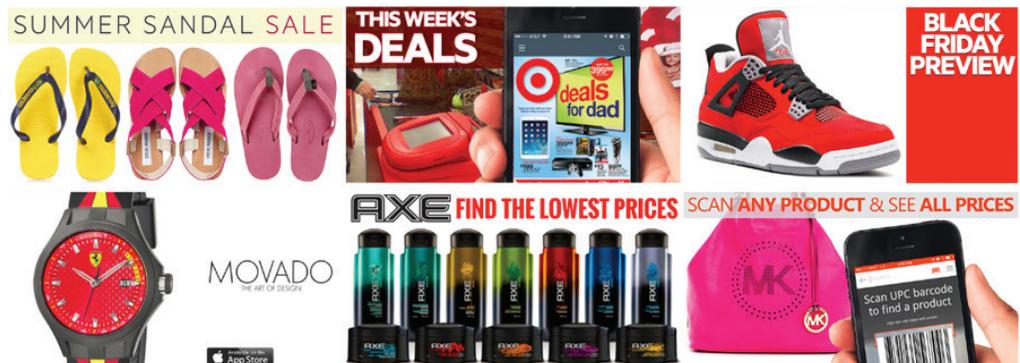
More Gaming: Why Do These Work?

The following ads worked well for us on behalf of our clients in the gaming category. Important strong creative elements include bold use of primary colors and strong calls-to-action. Game play and scoring are demonstrated, helping to illustrate what the game is about. Including images of mobile devices in the ad shows us that this is a mobile app, and the use of cute and friendly characters adds another layer of appeal.



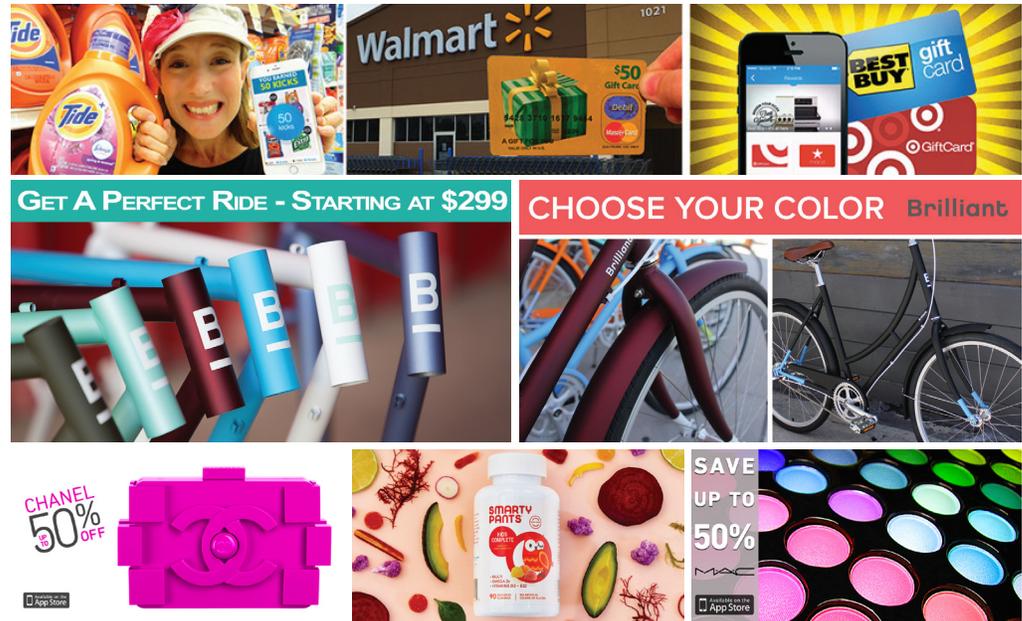
eCommerce: Why Do These Work?

Like gaming ads, strong eCommerce ads feature bold use of primary colors with a strong call-to-action. Large, recognizable products, brands, and logos should be the main attraction, with short and compelling calls-to-action. People are busy, and there's a lot of information competing for their attention, so don't make your audience read or otherwise work too hard. Ad copy should feature time, scarcity, terms like "free," and discounts. Quantifying can be helpful too -- feature %-off or \$-based pricing. Demonstrating the use of the app also helps to increase conversion rates.



More eCommerce: Why Do These Work?

Like the eCommerce ads featured above, these ads use bold primary colors and feature strong calls-to-action. They also use large recognizable products, brands, and logos, which is another important practice. Lastly, two of these photos were actually taken with a smartphone, so they fit stylistically into the Facebook newsfeed.



Entertainment: Why Do These Work?

Entertainment ads follow similar rules, and, like their counterparts in other categories, they work best when featuring bold use of primary colors, with strong calls-to-action and large, recognizable products, brands, and logos. Again, calls-to-action should be short and compelling, not requiring the user to read. Demonstrating use of the app in the ad drives conversion rates higher.



Cloud Storage: Why Do These Work?

Like the lifestyle app ad featured above, the cloud storage ads below showcase an acceptable use of stock photography. Even though the photos come from stock, which we do not recommend, these photos look like selfies of friends and family that one might find in the newsfeed -- accessible and cute pictures but not featuring supermodels. The women are happy and smiling, which is appealing, and adorable kids are always a positive. The rich-colored sunset image creates a dynamic and romantic setting that will grab attention.



NEXT: OPTIMIZING CREATIVE IS LIKE PERFECTING AN ELUSIVE RECIPE

Optimizing Creative Is Like Perfecting An Elusive Recipe

Once you find an image that meets our “best practices” guidelines, and that image performs successfully, you’re ready to start testing the addition and removal of other creative elements. Ingredients with which to experiment include the AppStore logo, stars for ratings (assuming they’re positive), “free” banner, etc. However, with all of these elements, the governing rule of “less is more” applies, so you’ll end up adding these elements as you’d add salt to a recipe, sparingly. See the examples below for insight into some of the many variations we might test in developing a given ad.

Testing will show that certain elements will increase or decrease conversion rates, and selecting the right mix of elements requires systematic experimentation, one variable at a time.



Once you’ve found the perfect recipe, run with it and take advantage of it. Facebook ads have a short life, and they stop performing after they’ve become over-exposed and lost their novelty. After about 4 to 10 days, it’s time to start all over again with new creative, so get the most out of your recipe while it lasts!



Once you’ve found the perfect recipe, run with it and take advantage of it. Facebook ads have a short life, and they stop performing after they’ve become over-exposed and lost their novelty. After about 4 to 10 days, it’s time to start all over again with new creative, so get the most out of your recipe while it lasts!

Your Optimized Ad Died.

Now What?

So you worked hard, you followed the rules, you created a “killer ad,” and you got good conversions -- for about a week, or maybe even for less time. Then your hard-won victory started to seep away, as the ad started to feel familiar, and hence less compelling, to your audience. What now? Don't despair -- tweaking a successful ad is easier than starting from scratch. You've already identified a successful format, so don't change that. Change components like different models and different colors, but don't tinker with the underlying structure of the ad.

The ad creative below represent sample variations on a sweepstakes app. You'll note that these tests involve different images of a winner, with varying expressions and poses, against one unchanging image on the right. The only way to identify a clear hit is to perform small tests against all of these images. You may have to keep looking for images after testing a small sample like these, because this is a numbers game. You can expect to try hundreds of images before identifying a strong performer.



Expect 1 out of 20 Ads to Work

If we didn't make it clear enough already, this is not a game for the lazy, and it's not a time to settle for “good enough.” If you try to run with ads with mediocre test results, you'll be wasting your capital on ads that don't convert and don't pay for themselves. In our extensive experience, only 1 out of 20 ads tested will work, so the odds are that being lazy will cost you 95% of the time. Only about 5 images out of every 100 tested work, and that's before you've started tweaking other elements. So, expect more failure than success, and realize that each failed test will cost money before it offers a result. You may feel like you're “wasting” a lot of money for the testing process alone, but that's the price of knowledge and success. Of course, hiring a professional might help...

Keep the Tests Small

By now, we hope we've convinced you that your life as a Facebook ad buyer will include lots of testing --

7 days a week, 18 hours a day. Because your ads will quickly become outdated, you'll always be testing, and you should expect to spend 10-15% of your monthly budget on testing.

Here's one trick to help ease the strain of trial and error on your pocketbook: keep the tests small but target from within a large data set. Smaller tests are more manageable and easier to plan than large tests, and they enable you to learn something for a reasonable \$15 or so. That's right -- we launch each ad and variation with a budget of \$15. That might not sound like a lot, but keep in mind you'll need to test hundreds of variations. In general, companies with medium-sized marketing budgets might allocate about \$25k to learn how to run a successful campaign. There could certainly be cases in which smaller test budgets could work, and we evaluate each situation on a case-by-case basis. Occasionally, you might hit a home run out the gate, but, in general, expect to work hard for success.

One Choice At A Time

As you have realized by now, running Facebook ads involves careful consideration of multiple variables. We've discussed the importances of images, colors, and copy, but the details don't stop there. Other critical decisions will involve what bid option to select and what audiences to target. These choices will certainly affect performance and ROI, and it's important to optimize these items one step at a time. Trying to optimize all of these pieces at the same time can be very challenging and will cost a significant amount of money. So, start with one choice, then focus on testing that before you move on to the next thing. Focused testing will help you achieve greater efficiency from your ads and learn faster.

Reward the Viewer

Successful ads tend to offer a sense of reward or value. In other words, a good ad may elicit a smile or provide valuable information. Studies show that people are more likely to remember and be influenced by ads that feature a clear focal point, prominent branding, brand-appropriate creative, and a sense of reward -- does it make you smile or deliver useful information?

Ad Copy & Calls-To- Action

We've tested a lot of ad copy, and we've learned that, like in the area of photos and colors, some copy usually works better than the rest. Here are some insights into important keywords, by category.

MOBILE APPS

Use power language like "Best New App," "Top-Ranked," "Most Addictive," or "Top-Ranked Game." Try to quantify wherever possible: xx songs downloaded or xx million users, for example.

E-COMMERCE

Name the brands specifically, mention pricing savings, and/or limit time offers like "Black Friday Door-Busters" and "Free Shipping." Keep text minimal with language such as "Ships in 2 Days," so the product remains the focus.

AUTOMOTIVE

Focus on savings and phrases like "Clearance Pricing," "No Hassle," and "No Haggle." Tap into viewers' desire to read quickly, with catchy statements like "Year-End Savings" or "Guaranteed Invoice Pricing."

Headline Testing

A/B testing Facebook ad headlines can increase your profit by 25% or more. Just because your current headline works, that doesn't mean there's no room for improvement. "Challenging" your current headline by trying something new and different can help boost performance pretty efficiently, and this kind of change is easily set up and tested. You need only create a clone of the ad then change the headline to a new one, with a small change like that garnering potential CTR increases of 10-50% and lower CPCs, resulting in lower cost-per-actions.

In the campaigns we manage, we are continually running headline tests to increase performance. We expect a test success rate of less than 20%, but we know that the successful changes will help take our performance to the next level. In the case of one of our clients, we recently challenged a long-running headline that included a 78-character-long fragmented sentence. We replaced that copy with a shorter, more playful message of 31 characters, in a style more typical of what an average person might post on Facebook. The new shorter, more playful message generated a 32% increase in CTR.



Small Wins Add Up

Mastering the art of Facebook advertising involves patience and a thorough, step-by-step, quantitative and analytical approach. Keep in mind that change is incremental, and a consistent amount of small improvements can lead to huge increases in ROI. Even small lifts in CTR or decreases in CPC will move performance in the right direction and add up, over time, into big numbers. Steady progress and small wins will very quickly create large impact for your brand and budget.

Now it's your turn -- ready to kick your advertising up a notch?

Best Practices Summary Highlights



We've thrown a lot at you here. Let's try to wrap up and highlight the key points for review. If we've taught you one thing, we hope it's that testing is important! Test at least 10 images, if not hundreds, to maximize click-through-rate. Once you've found a strong image, improve the CTR by testing 5-10 variations of ad copy. Keep the ad fresh by rotating out the creative as soon as performance drops: could be anywhere between 4 and 10 days, depending on audience size, spend, and CTR%. Test 10-20 new images a week. Keep it short, offer something of value, feature bold, primary colors, and make the product and branding the focus. Hire an expert to help shorten your learning curve and save you time and money.

Other resources you may find helpful:

- <https://blog.kissmetrics.com/30-facebook-advertising-resources/>
- http://fbrep.com/research/Facebook_study-Democratizing_ad_ratings.pdf
- <http://support.adroll.com/creative-best-practices/>
- <http://www.slideshare.net/IABmembership/trends-opportunities-and-best-practices-in-mobile-creative>
- <http://www.insidefacebook.com/2014/03/05/5-best-practices-for-great-facebook-ad-creative/>
- <http://www.ampush.com/blog/creative-best-practice-for-a-home-run-ad/>
- <http://www.qwaya.com/facebook-ads/create-facebook-ads>
- <http://www.slideshare.net/IABmembership/trends-opportunities-and-best-practices-in-mobile-creative>
- <http://blog.wishpond.com/post/63575637531/6-facebook-ad-image-best-practices-that-will-send>



T E S T I M O N I A L S



Manu Sharma | [ShopKick](#)
VICE PRESIDENT, GROWTH
AND DATA SCIENCE

"ConsumerAcquisition has delivered amazing results from mobile app install advertising on Facebook. **With a relentless focus on creative testing and audience expansion, this team has reduced our cost-per-install, increased user engagement and delivered profitability at scale.** The cost savings vs. other agencies and bid management solutions has been tremendous. "



Sean Fox | [Bills.com](#)
CO-PRESIDENT AND CHIEF
REVENUE OFFICER, FREEDOM
FINANCIAL NETWORK

"ConsumerAcquisition helped us establish our Facebook user acquisition channel, trained our team and then handed over all the accounts. By working closely together, we grew the channel meaningfully in two quarters and continue to build our Facebook business with the approach ConsumerAcquisition installed. In addition, they provided some great feedback and ideas to optimize our landing pages that help lift conversion rates meaningfully. **Facebook is tough to conquer, but this team brings tremendous knowledge and experience to that task and gives you a great shot at success.**"



Tyson Woeste | [TrueCar](#)
VP MARKETING

"ConsumerAcquisition pairs deep automotive experience with an impressive track record for Facebook advertising. They worked with us to build our Facebook acquisition channel on the web, optimized ad spend for both new and returning users to meet our cost targets. They've also impressed me by driving an incredibly low cost for mobile app installs. **These guys are all about performance, and I recommend them to any company who wants to grow.**"



Ramneek Bhasin | [TheFind.com](#)
GM MOBILE & VP PRODUCTS

"**ConsumerAcquisition is an absolute world-class organization that brought tremendous growth and efficiency to our paid acquisition efforts.** They work with us across both mobile and paid search user acquisition, significantly outperforming all our previous Ad agencies. They learned our business quickly and massively scaled both business lines. As if that wasn't sufficient, they continue to impress us with their deep analytical approach at increasing ROI, incredible attention to detail, and last but not least — 24/7 responsiveness. "



Jim Miller | [OnlineConvergence.com](#)
FOUNDER AND CEO

"We hired ConsumerAcquisition.com to help us grow our app installs. Brian and his team have worked hard testing lots of new creative and strategies to find concepts and creative that work. **They increased our mobile installs more than 600% while maintaining our cost-per-install.** Their constant testing and determination have helped our company increase growth and find new areas of opportunity."



Doug Wheeler | [Real Networks](#)
VP MARKETING

"**ConsumerAcquisition is relentless in their pursuit of growth and optimization of subscribers and app installs on our behalf. They have decreased cost-per-install and increased mobile installs 1000%.** They work with our team to optimize Facebook & Twitter mobile app installs, Google paid acquisition and landing pages. They have successfully scaled our business and we continue to be impressed with their 24/7 responsiveness. "

KICK YOUR MOBILE APP **ADVERTISING** UP A NOTCH

KICK YOUR MOBILE APP
ADVERTISING

UP A NOTCH



CONSUMERACQUISITION.COM

Sales@ConsumerAcquisition.com

925.583.5270