MEDIA OPTIMIZATION GUIDE

Six Steps to Plan and Pace Your Media Buys for Maximum Impact
Introduction

Customers’ behaviors and demands are evolving at a rapid pace, and marketers need to keep up. Not only do marketers need to be data-driven, they need to be able to adapt to the rise of the all-digital customer.

With ecommerce growing more than 30% in 2020, and customers increasingly desiring digital experiences across all their brand interactions, it’s more urgent than ever to digitally transform every part of the marketing process.

Media planning is just one of the many things that must be aligned to an agile marketing strategy by becoming more automated and connected to the rest of the business. Media planning and pacing are essential parts of data-driven marketing, and function as critical tools for marketers to proactively understand how campaigns are performing according to business objectives.

Media optimization relies on action by both brands and agencies. Brands should ask if they truly understand how their budgets are being spent – is every dollar being spent effectively?

On the flip side, agencies should ask if there’s more they can do to drive value for their clients and provide greater transparency.

In other words, everyone should be asking: “How can we be more efficient and drive growth from every investment?”

That starts with taking a hard look at your media planning processes, systems, and partners. How can you ensure these are all interconnected so you can get a holistic view of your digital media at the speed and convenience you need?

As budgets come under more scrutiny, it’s never been more important to get a handle on your media – and ultimately make everything you do more efficient and more effective. It’s also an opportunity to innovate, lead, and rethink the way your company uses media. If you do, you will come out the other side better prepared to drive growth in the future.

Here are six steps marketers can take right now to start optimizing media planning and pacing.
STEP 1
Create a single source of truth for your media budgets and plans.

Too often, media teams make mistakes because there’s simply too many plans, too many people modifying them, and no single place to collaborate. Information can be spread across files on different people’s machines, in different versions, without a clear idea of what truths live where.

That’s why it’s important to create a single system for all teams to work across. It can be a time-consuming process to find the right system (or create one yourself) – but the time investment will be worth it when all team members are empowered through an aligned system without unnecessary silos.
STEP 2

Leverage historic performance and spend data during your media planning process.

Leveraging data may sound simple enough, but many media planners don’t take full advantage of their data when it comes to making decisions on budget allocation.

In large part, that’s because it’s much easier said than done. Leveraging your data goes beyond just having the data. In order to find insights and use them during your media planning process, all data must be connected and trustworthy.

Even then, you may have to search through mountains of data to find the insights you need.

That’s where analytics tools can save the day. It’s a major investment to set up a back end of historic analytics, but a lack of analysis renders data practically useless, leading to educated (or not-so-educated) guesses, rather than data-driven decisions.
STEP 3

Look for the biggest opportunities and biggest losses first when allocating budget.

It's easy to get lost in the weeds of your historic data. Instead of trying to take in all the details at once or looking to affirm your initial assumptions, focus on finding the outliers on each end of the performance spectrum. This will help inform important first steps of cutting losses and investing in high-performing tactics.

With all data connected in a single view, look for channels, platforms, campaigns, and creative with high performance and low spend. These are the ones to test investing more in to get more impact for less budget.

Then, look for channels, platforms, campaigns, and creative with low performance and high spend. These are the ones to cut and reinvest that spend elsewhere.

By making these key decisions upfront, you waste no time optimizing the most influential parts of your media spend. You can go deeper into the data and find new ways to optimize after these initial steps, but it always pays to start here first.
STEP 4
Connect your planned and delivered data.

Your data on what’s already happened only tells half the story. To be truly efficient, you need to understand the difference between what’s ultimately delivered versus what was originally planned – and how you can find efficiencies in between.

Joining those datasets is key for getting a handle on your media budget. You should be able to understand the dedicated budget amount, determined time period, agreed-upon goals, and what buys ultimately took place and when.

It can be a complicated process: Connecting these two data points automatically and at scale is often easier said than done, particularly for teams running dozens, hundreds, or even thousands of media campaigns. Dedicated tools are often best for these cases, though it can be done manually (by exporting and reconciling reports from your media plans and your advertising platforms) with significant resource and time investment.

Either way, the investment will pay back dividends and you’ll enjoy a level of control over your budget that increases exponentially over time.
STEP 5
Pace your media campaigns for midflight optimization.

Joining your planned and delivered data also allows you to better pace your campaigns throughout the entire campaign lifecycle. Much like a marathon runner, you should be pacing every leg of your campaign to make sure that it’s on track to hit the big-picture goal you initially set. This takes careful planning upfront and while the campaign is running, which is only possible through connected data.

Holding the sell-side accountable to what was agreed to – and identifying any issues midflight rather than after a campaign is already over – can mean the difference between a successful campaign and a waste of money.
STEP 6

Push for ad quality and audit for wasted spend and discrepancies.

Finally, marketers can drive efficiency with their media by using viewability and verification metrics. Ads that go unseen are obviously not effective, so it’s vital that marketers catch discrepancies every time they happen. It’s also critical to verify your media to make sure you’re meeting brand safety standards and detecting any fraudulent ad activity.

While there’s plenty of work done upfront to make sure everything goes as planned, auditing for any discrepancies can save you time and money when you need it most.

Having this holistic view enables an accurate understanding so you can be more agile with your budget. That means that whether you’re moving money out or putting money in, you can make sure you’re getting the most out of what you’ve got.
Power Media Optimization with Salesforce Datorama

At Salesforce Datorama, we understand that media decisions are harder than ever. Marketers need to get — and show — results for everything they do.

So what’s a marketer to do? By becoming more automated, efficient, and connected to the rest of the business, marketing teams can navigate this intense period of change while maintaining efficiency and positioning themselves for growth.

That’s why we’re excited to announce the arrival of the new Datorama Media Impact Optimization solution, an add-on package of intelligent media tools built on Datorama’s leading connection and harmonization technology, visualizations, and Einstein AI.

With the Media Impact Optimization solution, you can strategically allocate your media budgets, pace your media buys in-flight, and easily reconcile your media data for faster, more agile reporting.
The Media Impact Optimization solution consists of:

- **Media Planning Center**: Optimize your media budget allocations with advanced planning analytics, and use AI to forecast performance and make data-driven decisions based on past campaigns.

- **Media Transparency Center**: Reconcile your planned spend and your delivered spend automatically for in-flight pacing, discrepancy analysis, billing, and reporting.

- **Media Pacing App**: Visualize and explore your in-flight media pacing with an interactive out-of-the-box dashboard.

Together, these tools help marketing teams:

- **Optimize budgets with Einstein AI**: Create, manage, and analyze media plans in one centralized place. Allocate budget intelligently with an easy-to-use, shareable planning interface complete with automatic historic spend and performance AI insights pulled from Datorama.

- **Evolve campaign strategy with agility**: Automatically connect plan, buy, and performance data to continuously optimize investments and drive business objectives.

- **Run advanced forecast analyses**: Use advanced statistical methods to forecast your media plan performance and make decisions based on data, not intuition.

- **Visualize pacing in-flight**: Use the out-of-the-box Media Pacing App to automatically pace media buys – as campaigns run in-market – to understand at a glance whether you’re on track to meet your goals while staying on budget.

The result is a complete analytics framework for strategic decision-making at every step of the media process. Rather than make decisions based on intuition and juggle constantly changing spreadsheets, you can focus on optimizing your media for impact.

Learn more about the Media Impact Optimization solution.