

THE NEWCOMER'S GUIDE TO SPONSORING VIDEOS ON YOUTUBE

GoAnimate

Last week I set out to make a sponsored video campaign on YouTube, and the process was quite a challenge. So I decided to write a detailed post about the experience to help other folks avoid the head scratches, phone calls to support, and grimaces that dominated my experience.

Caveat: I am not a professional YouTube ad campaign manager, and I'm 100% certain many of the errors within this comedy of errors were of my own making. But while I may be but a humble marketing generalist, I'd like to think that I'm not a helpless blockhead -- and this was certainly not my first rodeo purchasing media online.

So here's how to set up and run a sponsored video campaign on YouTube. The tips will be organized chronologically in terms of the mistakes I made along the way; I've skipped over some of the obvious steps like "hit save."

1. Make sure the Google Adwords account you're using to run the campaign is tied to the same email address as your YouTube channel.

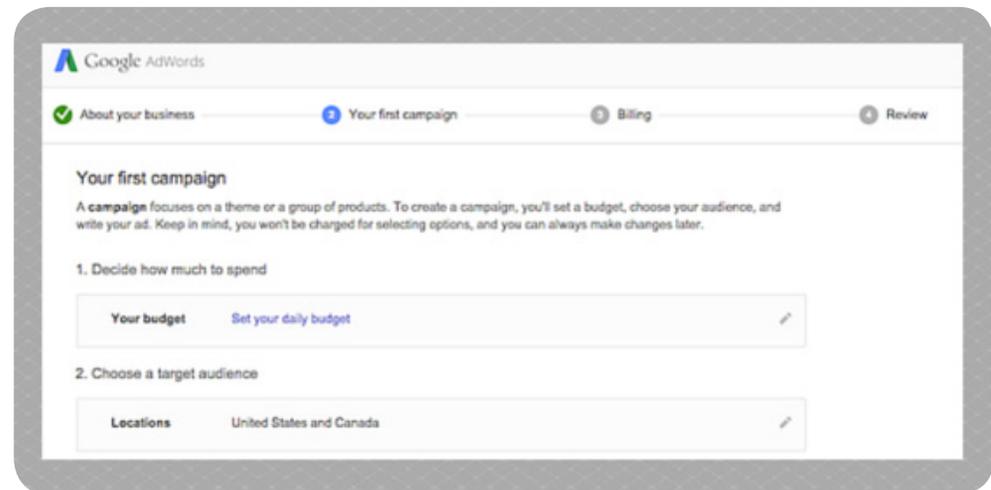
You can set up the two campaigns through separate YouTube and Adwords accounts but the limitations will come back to haunt you. *More on that later.*

2. Your account's first Adwords campaign can't feature video.

This was the biggest headscratcher as I wasn't armed with that information coming in. Assuming this is your first campaign on your Adwords account, you'll see this opening page after setting up the account. The problems aren't limited to the design.

Note there is no option to create a video campaign here. So basically I had to sign up and allocate money (I was prompted to input credit card information and a budget to get past this screen) on a traditional Adwords text-based campaign that I did not want. I stared at this page and clicked around for hours trying to make sure I wasn't losing my mind. Finally I called Google Support based on a phone number I found on this page. I spoke with 3 agents before someone could answer my query.

The nice rep confirmed that there is indeed no way to create a video campaign as your first Adwords campaign. You have to set up a traditional text-based campaign first and then delete it. The nice rep on the phone also conceded that this is not the best experience for the user.



So for the sake of clarity it's important to remember that there is no distinction between AdWords, AdWords for Video, and YouTube Advertising. It's all one entity -- Adwords, on which you can sponsor a video, but only after first creating a dummy campaign that doesn't involve video.

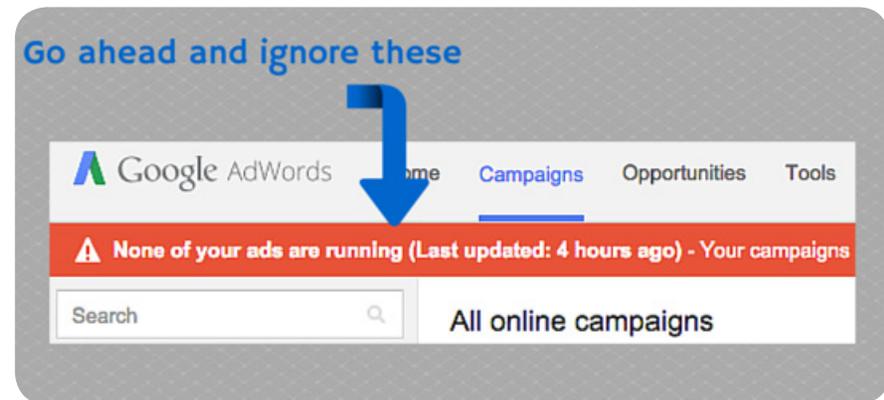
3. Find the "All video campaigns" button in the bottom left corner of the Campaigns tab in your Adwords account. Now you can start setting up your video-based campaign. Without clicking on that link you're just swimming around in the text-based-ad-only world.

4. Ignore all the red and yellow "alert" boxes across the top of the screen within your account. For the remainder of your time running campaigns in Adwords you're going to see a variety of different messages up there. Several messages state your campaign isn't yet up and running; others ask if you want a guided tour (*note: the guided tour isn't very helpful*). Don't be alarmed; just click out of them. The rep on the phone told me that the messages basically have a 4-hour pre-lag. In other words, the system is taking a snapshot of your account from 4 hours earlier -- so of course your ads aren't running yet as you haven't finished setting them up.

Additional note: I'm not trying to pile on Google here. I like Google, and use many of their products; Gmail is wonderful, and I mourned the loss of Google Wave like I mourn the loss of any 5-tool prodigy who gets stuck in the minors. But in this case I assume there are still disparate remnants of the YouTube acquisition making the backend overly complex, and one can only speculate that a major redesign is in the works.

5. The process of adding CTAs to the video ads was the second biggest impasse. After finally inputting the basic specifications for my video campaign -- intro text, thumbnail, budget, geos, etc -- I was wondering how and where I can send folks from a CTA on the sponsored video (*more on that later*) to my internal landing page.

Apparently you can, but only half the time -- via In-stream videos. These videos "play before another video on either YouTube Video or the Google Display Network." These seem to work well for my reporting; I want intentioned folks on my landing pages so I can show ROI.



The other type of Google Video Ad, called In-display, does not let me set a custom destination URL. These ads appear at the top page in sponsored placements when people search for your keywords (*see #6 below for more on these*) but DO NOT allow you link back to your site. Instead, the ad must link back to either your YouTube homepage or to the video on YouTube itself. A more cynical person might conclude that you're paying YouTube to send more traffic to... YouTube.

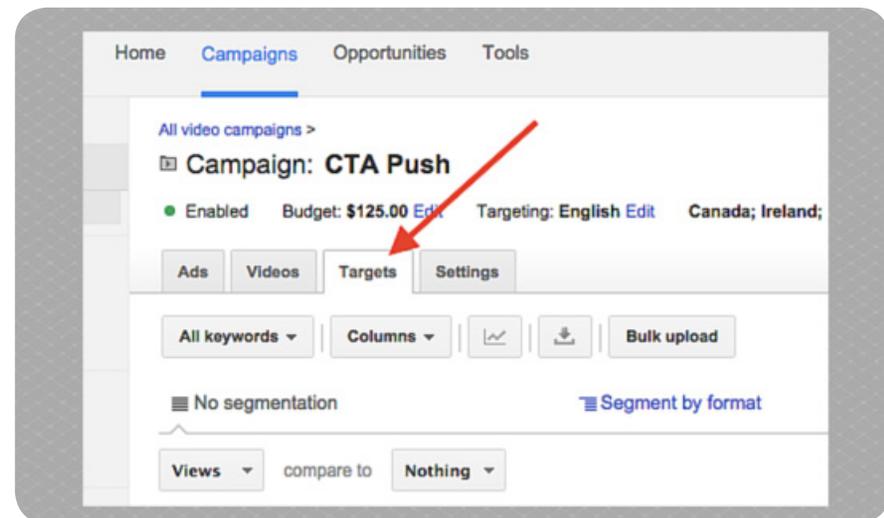
There's not much help copy on this issue, so I called my support rep friend (*I'd previously asked for his direct line*). He confirmed that if you click on both In-stream and In-display ads there's no guarantee for a 50-50 split of resources, either -- an inconvenient truth for your reporting data. In other words you can't control the blend; accordingly it might be better to just go with the In-stream ads. Based on a small sample size of one campaign the click thru rates for In-display and In-stream were almost identical. And the most convenient thing about In-stream videos is that if folks click out of them in fewer than 30 seconds -- you don't pay anything for the impression. If you video is shorter than 30 seconds you don't pay unless someone finishes it.

6. It's not easy to target ads based on YouTube keyword searches. When I was first prompted to enter the Interests of the people I wanted to target I was shocked how broad they were. For about 20 minutes I was under the impression I had to settle on "business" as my targeted audience. I knew something wasn't right -- but persisted because I just wanted to get some kind of campaign up and running.

The way to target specific keywords is relatively hidden. Once you create and save your campaign you're sent to the main campaign monitoring screen full of charts. There's a mini-nav that starts with "Ads" on the left (*shown to the right*). Click on Targets to get to the screen on which you can finally target viewers who search for various keywords on YT.

There's even a nice interface with related KW suggestions.

It's unfortunate that one of the most important variables of the campaign -- to whom I am targeting my ads -- is buried 2 screens and 2 sub-navs deep in the process.



7. **Adding a CTA link from the sponsored video itself is super confusing.** Remember in tip/grimace #1 when I wrote that you should use the same email address for Adwords that you use for YouTube? Here's where it comes in handy. You can't add a CTA link from the sponsored video if you don't use the same account. It doesn't really say that anywhere so I called my new friend at Google Support again and he walked me through the labyrinthine process to make CTAs happen -- but then I lost my voluminous notes!

So I googled around and landed on this [helpful page](#). What's interesting in these directions is that you set up the CTAs through YouTube and NOT Adwords. The process the rep walked through on the phone went through Adwords -- so apparently both are possible.

I was surprised how easy this was -- and now a handsome CTA window (*linking out to a url of my choosing, on my domain*) sits on the video (josh add link, or embed example. Trial ad) for all paid views AND free views, which is a nice mini-perk. Note you cannot add this CTA window to any video; I tried that. You can only add it to videos that are sponsored in Adwords. Once you put money behind a video in Adwords, you'll be able to click on the Call-to-Action Overlay for that video inside your Dashboard.

One interesting idea is to put a single daily dollar (*the minimum spend*) behind a video and create a tiny campaign. This spend would "turn-on" the CTA window across the web, wherever that video sits inside a YouTube player. So, for example, if your video were to be picked up by the Huffington Post, which uses the YT video player, you could, for only a dollar a day, entice all those viewers to a custom landing page on your domain through YT's slick CTA window, available only to sponsored videos. But then of course I'd have to go through all the trouble of creating another campaign. :)

I hate to cop out and say any and all errors I made in the post are YouTube's fault because I was flailing around so much. I surely could have done hours of research before getting started, and that preparation would have made the process much less headscratching. Hopefully this blog post provides that service for you.



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