

How we increased Bauer Media's subscriptions via paid media by 42%

The brief

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To improve and beat the previous year's subscription performance, without compromising the CPA.

It's no secret that the publication industry is in decline. Industry trends show a 20-50% drop in subscriptions each year, depending on the title. We needed to build and execute a strategy to counteract this downward trend, whilst increasing subscriptions year on year.

The approach

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The magazine industry is a fast-paced, dynamic market and we knew it was essential to create an innovative, yet simple, campaign strategy to cater to this. First and foremost, our strategy had to drive sales, and secondly, it was vital that we were able to keep up with the regularly changing publications, their offers and messaging.

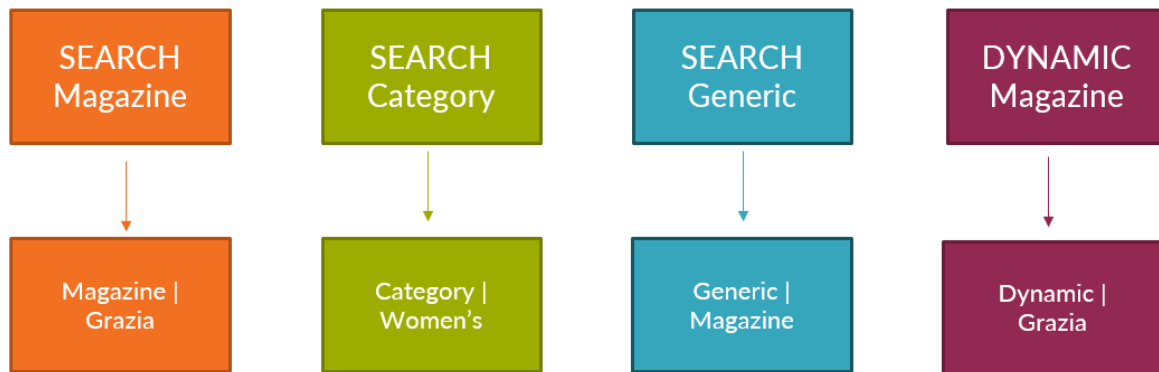
We put our heads together and developed the following strategy, which we have simplified and broken down into steps - starting with perfecting the basics, and then branching out to additional paid activity.



To view the video version of this case study, click the image above.

Step 1 – Search

We needed a simple and structurally sound search campaign structure. We laid out a basic template, starting with campaigns containing specific magazine title terms, then broadening to more generic magazine terms. Alongside these, we utilised dynamic search ads to capture terms that would normally be deemed low search volume. The combination of these campaigns drive last-click sales, assisted conversions and, crucially, drive traffic to our landing pages enabling us to generate audience lists.



This structure allowed us the freedom to easily move budget up and down based on performance. If the account was performing well, we knew we could push budget down to the generic terms to get those extra sales, and similarly we could pull our budget right back up when the account was not performing as well.

Step 2 - Audiences

As our audience lists grew, we could segment these into specific pools of users and use them alongside our RLSA campaigns. Our careful segmentation allowed us to tailor our ad copy messaging and make informed bid adjustments depending on a user's intent to purchase. We knew that our customers were less likely to purchase on a first-time click, which is so often the case nowadays, so our RLSA campaigns were an integral part to our strategy.

We also utilised Google's Customer Match to fill in any gaps in our audience lists. These helped us to target customers who had purchased last year during peak times, such as Black Friday weekend and Christmas.

Step 3 – Shopping

We then created our shopping campaigns. We began by building a feed which updated whenever Bauer's site changed, for example, if a price on the website updated, our shopping feed would update to reflect this. We then built out our shopping campaigns, categorised and then split by item ID to allow us to bid on products individually, giving us greater control. We overlaid our audiences on top of these campaigns too.

Step 4 – Bing and Yahoo

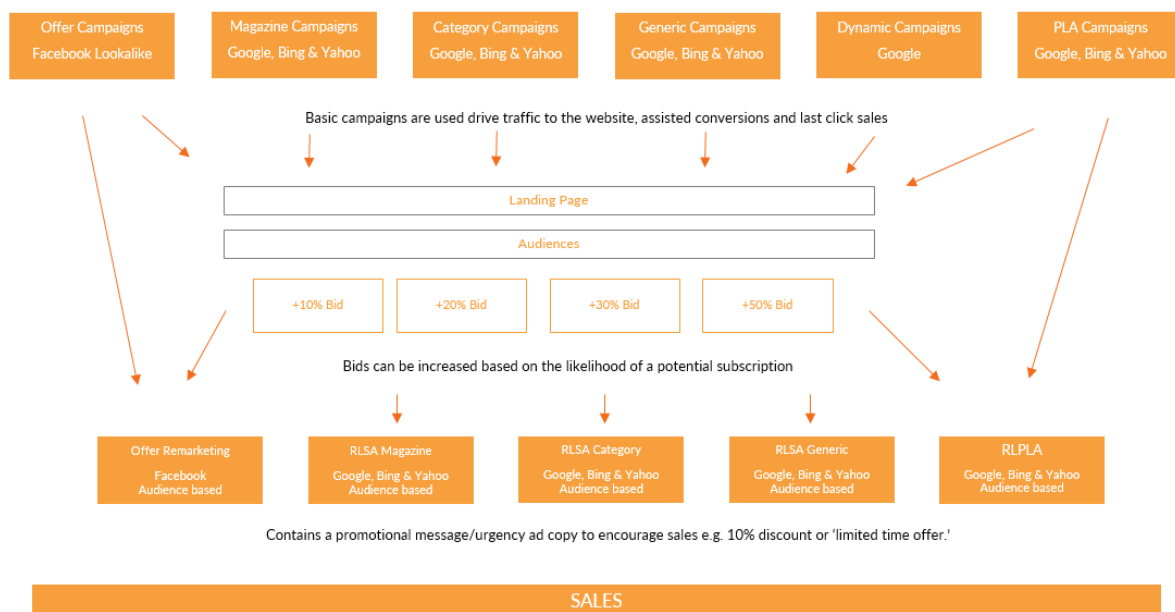
At this point, it seemed logical to expand onto other platforms. Together, Bing and Yahoo account for 22% of the UK market share, so in this declining industry, migrating to these two platforms was a no-brainer to help bridge that gap. The replication process was simple for both platforms, and it meant we were covering more bases.

Step 5 – Facebook and Instagram

In terms of paid search, we had a solid structure that in worked in sync to deliver some serious results. But we had some demanding targets, and we needed to get in front of a completely new audience to help boost sales. We were able to utilise our Customer Match email lists and upload these to Facebook - creating lookalike audiences based on these lists. We then teamed these with an offer campaign to encourage subscriptions. This proved to be a huge success, with over 3,000 offers claimed over Black Friday weekend alone. All claimed from people that may not have even heard of Bauer before - which is pretty incredible.

The Overarching Strategy

Taking a step back, here's a simple visualisation of our overarching strategy, in which you can see how all the elements come together to fuel those subscriptions, whilst doing so efficiently.



The results

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We increased the number of subscriptions for Bauer by 42% year on year.

We beat record numbers.

We beat Bauer's previous record day for subscriptions by a hefty 40% - but we didn't just do this once. We managed to beat this record day an additional 10 times in the days to follow.

We slimmed down CPA by a third.

In instances like this, when we are pushing the account so hard to achieve such demanding targets, we would expect CPA to increase. However, despite the declining market, we managed to decrease CPA by 36%.



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