



Expert Summit

MASTERCLASS TRANSCRIPT



How To Get Started In Online Advertising

[Jonathan Cann] Hi, welcome to part of the Namecheap Experience Summit. I'm here with Jonathan Fichman to talk about how to harness digital advertising, especially for the small business. Welcome Jonathan.

[Jonathan Fichman] Hi, thanks for having me here.

- No problem. Can you introduce a bit about yourself and what you do?

- Yes, sure. I am the Director of Paid Advertising at Namecheap. So what that means is that I am overseeing all of our paid online marketing activities, specifically that would include channels like Google Ads, which is paid search, display advertising, and advertising on small, other kind of niche websites, so really everything that has to do with the digital advertising for Namecheap's business. I have a background of about ten years in online advertising. I've worked at both agencies and companies across several industries like finance, consumer electronics, consumer goods, and now at Namecheap, obviously we sell web services to our customers, so now in the sort of all digital products realm, so to speak.

- Cool, thank you. And so why is online advertising important for Namecheap?

- Sure, I can answer that, because that's what we do every day. Well, we're a digital business and we sell digital products, so if people are going to find us, we need to be there in the places that they're looking when they're going to make decisions about whether, what they want to purchase, with respect to our industry. So for example, when people are looking to buy a domain name or they're looking to compare different hosting services on their merit, they're going to Google, they're obviously searching, they're visiting reviews sites, independent blogs, things like that, and they may also click on links that they see from different companies that offer these products. Some of these links are paid, and this is a place that we know people are having the intent to do research or purchase, and so it's really important for us to promote our product in the place where people are going when they're making these decisions. So Google search is a big one, as I said, social networks are also a big one, though I personally, at Namecheap don't oversee that, but those are important places that people go to get opinions from experts and make their decisions about who they think is the best provider. LinkedIn is also an important platform for business owners, because it's an important, you know, business to business networking tool, and even YouTube, because that's a place where people go to understand how to use the different kinds of products in our industry and to get unbiased information from people in the industry and in the space.

- Cool. So that's great for a bigger company like Namecheap, but what about the small store, what about the two-man band, what about the freelancer, why would online be important for them, online advertising be useful for them?

- Yes, it might not seem so obvious to a smaller business. You might think that a bigger business like Namecheap, having bigger budgets, online advertising might be a natural thing for us because we have a brand that we're running. However, that is true for us, but if you're a smaller business, whether that means you're a freelancer who's offering digital services, or you run a brick and mortar kind of mom and pop business, these days, no matter what industry you're in, almost nobody is untouched anymore by the Internet, and there's almost no product or service left that people don't turn to the Internet to understand how to evaluate products and services and service providers and make those decisions, and there are a number of online platforms that exist where you can actually make your business more visible and get yourself out there to the right people at the right time with actually a limited amount of time and budget.

So even with a small budget and even with no budget, you can help your business be visible online when customers are looking for you.

I can personally say, as an online advertiser and as a person who just uses the Internet a lot, it's always very frustrating when you're looking for some basic information about a business like, if we're talking about a brick and mortar business you want to find their opening hours, you want to find the menu for a restaurant, or you want to find a simple price list or something like that and you Google the business because that's often where we turn to find that information, and you can't find it because that information hasn't been uploaded properly to the business's listing, the business doesn't have a website or the website is hard to find through a simple Google search, those are common problems that make businesses not visible online, and so taking care of those listings and those places where you can have your presence even without spending money, the one, there's different platforms that are maybe relevant for your sector. Google is potentially relevant for almost all sectors, for many Amazon actually can be a relevant sector, if you're selling products online and you sell through Amazon, but being sure to get that presence set up and set up right so that you can be found when people are looking for you is really really important.

So a tip for example that I will give to a small business owner is if you never set up your Google my business account, for example, you should do that and make sure that it has the current and accurate business information, pictures of your business, if it's relevant for your product to have pictures of your product, then upload them there, too, so that when people look for you or when they look for you say in Google Maps because you're a brick and mortar business, the information is there and it's accurate and they will come to you. Otherwise, they'll skip over you and look for a business where they can find that information.

- Isn't setting up the business listing free though?

- It is free, but this does still have to do with online advertising because you have to have the basics of your online presence set up correctly before you can really think about spending money trying to attract people to your website. So, without a way to be easily found or without a website that's properly organized and optimized so that the information people

need to know about your business is clearly accessible with a minimal number of clicks, you don't want to start even spending money driving people to that kind of a website. You're just going to bring people to a website where it's not going to be easy for them to discover your business and know why they should do business with you. So, things like a business listing, it's like a prerequisite to even doing online advertising, but it's related to online advertising because a business listing appears on the places where people advertise and where people go to find information like Google Ads, and for that reason, your business listing it's just something that if you don't have it set up right, you can't really do anything else.

- So, let's say my business, I go and create a cake business. It's up to date online and my website is really ready to go, then how should someone look to get started?

- Sure, good question. So, first you really need to make a plan. You need to answer some questions and think about your business before you get started not unlike what you probably did when you made your business plan when you first started. You want to ask yourself really what are the kinds of potential customers you want to reach, maybe you've done this already so it's not that hard for you, maybe you're a digital business so you actually already know you wanted to reach customers online, this part then might already be done but if you have a brick and mortar business, you may not have ever thought about what are the potential customers you want to reach online. So understanding who you want to reach, what kind of demographic characteristics they may have. Do you tend to appeal, are your customers tend to come from a certain age group, do they live in a specific geographic area, is your customer base tend to skew male or female, these kind of questions are going to help you understand who would be the ideal target audience for an online advertising campaign that you run. And by defining this target audience before you start, you can determine the places that you can best reach that audience and make sure that your money is effectively spent. Another way to think about this is you can put together all these characteristics that your target audience has and once you have that together, you have something that we in marketing speak often call a persona. So you can create a few different kinds of personas of your potential customers and that can actually help you to really laser focus your targeting across the different ad platforms that are available.

- So really get to know your customer. Get to know your customer and understand your potential customer.

- Exactly.

- Cool. So once you created all that how can you decide which ad platforms to choose, because I know there are quite a few out there?

- Yes. Well obviously there's a few big players and you'll probably know a bit after doing these, developing some kind of personas, whether things like a Google or a place where people go to actively search for information are more relevant for you or whether maybe social networks are something more relevant for you. They have different kinds of targeting

opportunities but can appeal to different kinds of businesses. If you're in say a fashion business, Instagram or Facebook might be really relevant for you because it's really important people see your product before they even know more about you because it's a lot about that visual. If you're offering say, you know a home kind of service, like you're a carpenter, Google might be a little more relevant because the visual might not be so important for you. And the good news is with most of these different ad platforms, or at least the big players, typically they don't require a big up-front investment because for Google and Facebook and most of the other large platforms nowadays, you're only charged when people click on your ads. That's not every time the case but that tends to be the case. This is most well-known really from Google and many really have copied this cost-per-click pricing structure approach and they use it as well. So that's beneficial because you don't need to up front say put in ten grand just to get started, but you still need to know how to spend your money effectively in these platforms, because you can still very easily waste money and end up spending money on clicks that don't drive business to you. They drive unqualified traffic to your website. And simple mistakes in online advertising platforms really are often the reason why many businesses consider platforms like Google Ads to be a bad investment or just too expensive is something I've heard and they give up.

- So you mentioned unqualified ads in there, what do you mean by that?

- Unqualified traffic would mean if you are advertising and you're seeing that people are clicking on your ads, you're paying for those clicks, but when the people come to your website they're not actually doing the things that you would expect them to do that convert to business.

- Okay.

- So they're not filling out that leads form, they're not providing their email address, they're not creating an account, they're not ordering, you're seeing that you're spending money online but you're not getting more calls in, you're not getting more interest and that might be people confused but that often goes back to if you didn't create the persona at the beginning you may be targeting the wrong people. And that may mean that you get people clicking on your ads who actually aren't interested. So that can be why it seems like Google Ads is a waste of money, but it usually means that there's some miss-match there.

- Okay, thanks for that. So what are the most common mistakes people make around this?

- Yes, well, okay I won't detail every single mistake because nowadays there's really a lot of blog and video content about Google Ads for beginners and my exhaustive list won't be the first or the last, but I can give some common tips and tricks that I think are pretty easily accessible and easy to implement. And really in some way all of these kind of simple mistakes they boil down to one thing. It's really about if you didn't put in the work to set up your accounts right or you didn't do your research in understanding who really it is that you want to reach and you don't maintain those accounts properly and you expect them to run by

themselves, that's often where you get into trouble. So sloppy setups, not maintaining, you run into quick problems. Some people think it's a set-in and forget it situation but unfortunately it's not. It's a channel, another communications channel that you need to take on a regular basis.

- Okay. So, when should a business owner look to hire some outside resource, because I can imagine that could be quite costly, to manage online ad campaigns for them?

- Yes. Well, it depends, so the answer is it depends, and really I would say it depends on how much additional revenue and new customers you stand to gain from advertising online. If you know that your customers are online that they make purchase decisions for the products you sell on the Internet, you can do kind of a cocktail napkin math and estimate a bit how much additional revenue you might be able to get if you reach x number of new customers. Because you may, you should have an idea as a business owner how much revenue you typically receive per customer.

So let's say you specialise in a field where you acquire customers across a very very large geographic area. This might apply to for example an attorney who specializes in a niche kind of law and you could recruit clients all across the country. Then, the potential growth opportunity for you by advertising your business online would be really large because you're based in one city but you can acquire customers all over the country and the need for your legal services is the same in several different cities and states.

On the other hand, let's say you're a small corner store, you're on a busy street, your customer base mostly comes from foot traffic and word of mouth around the neighborhood, then online advertising might not stand to gain many more customers for you. You might be all set actually as long as you just get your business information online, make sure it's current and complete, your opening hours are there, people can clearly see what it is you sell, and you know, know what to expect before they come. Spending a lot of money to get an additional customer on the Internet in that case might not be for you.

So you know your business and I think with this kind of intuition about your business, knowing who your customers are and where you can acquire them, that means you stand to gain a lot by getting them on the Internet, then the investment in paying an outside resource, an agency or a freelancer or somebody who can take care of your campaign is likely to be worth it.

- So if you get as a business owner you agree right, okay I need someone to manage these ads, how do you know that the person or the agency you get is any good?

- Mm hmm, yes, good question. So, any online advertising professional they should listen to you, listen to how your business works, what your business model is and they should help you do some of the above exercises about identifying your potential customers, your target audience online which I was explaining earlier, and help, they should understand how your potential customers are behaving online and where you can reach them and so on. They don't necessarily need to have worked with exactly your kind of business before, but if they have it's often highly beneficial when they know your industry they will have a better sense of

what the costs are like in your specific sector and can help you set expectations on budget. But with the tools that are out there for online advertising professionals, for example the Google keyword planner within Google Ads, you can understand a lot about the you know price of clicks for very popular key words in your sector. But anyway, the person you're partnering with really on a fundamental level they should be able to understand your business need, they should be able to recommend appropriate action. And if you have some feeling for how big the opportunity is for your business online and in the course of getting to know, talking to an agency or doing a consultation with a freelancer, you have the feeling that maybe their recommendation isn't in sync with your business needs and you know you know them well then that may not be the right person for you. But luckily there are a lot of online advertising professionals out there and with networking and your professional network, and doing research online you should be able to find somebody who can understand your business, potentially even has experience in your industry and can help you be successful, especially if you feel you don't have the time or energy to take care of these accounts on your own and you don't want to learn all of it.

- So, most people in these troubled times are looking right, maybe I need to start something myself. And so I'm not going to go down the agency route, I don't have the cash to do that. So how can I learn about online advertising on my own?

- Yes. Well as I mentioned above we're in you know, fortunate times that there's a lot information online about these things, this being online advertising, everything is digitized. However, you can do well buying books even about online advertising nowadays. If you go to your local bookstore the "For Dummies" series for example have books about online marketing and online advertising that could be very helpful for a business owner or somebody trying to understand the online channels. But there're even so many resources across the Internet that you can access for no money. Some that I would recommend for beginners and that I use myself, there's a very popular blog from an agency called "WordStream" and they publish lots and lots of content about getting started in Google Ad words, about setting up your accounts right which I was mentioning, getting a good account structure in place, how to pick the right keywords and really take care of those basics. So they cover the things you might need to know for a variety of different business sizes which I think can be very helpful. And another resource I would recommend is Neil Patel who is a very popular online marketing presence now. He also runs an agency helping people with online marketing and although he got his start in search engine optimization, which is not paid advertising directly, he has lots and lots of content geared towards smaller business owners who are looking to grow their business online and paid advertising being a key way people do that he has lots and lots of content about that so that's another one that I would recommend.

- Thank you. So that's Neil Patel, WordStream, okay

- Exactly.

- Cool, thank you. So we're coming to the end of this, this vlog and if there's one thing that you would like to give, one piece of advice you would give for a small business owner to do, what would it be?

- I guess I would say really know your business, know who your customers are and do your best to understand how your customers are making decisions with respect to the products you sell on the Internet. Pick a platform based on where those customers are making those decisions, where they go to do research, where they go to buy, and read a lot, consume a lot of content, watch a lot of videos, be open to learning and yes I guess also have fun because there's a whole new world of marketing and for some types of people I think they can find actually some joy in playing around in these new platforms where there's really a lot of potential for business growth.

- Thank you, Jonathan. That brings an end to this pod.

- Thanks a lot. It was nice to talk to you.

- And you.

- Take care.