Pinsight Into a New Chapter:

My Experience as an Account Manager at Pinterest

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Abstract

In January 2018, I started my role as an Account Manager at Pinterest, where I learned how to manage advertising campaigns for a variety of partners. This includes setting up strategies for launching fresh campaigns, and once running, optimize towards the advertising partner's business objectives. This capstone project focuses on one partner in particular, who runs an online fashion retail business, for whom I had to set up a strategy, improve performance, and build trust and a relationship through appropriate communication. This capstone document reports literature which guided my work, my tasks, and assignments, and discusses what I have learned through this professional experience.

Acknowledgment

I want to thank the Communication Department at SUU, but in particular Matt Barton. It was with his help and commitment that I got to graduate with a bachelor's and a master's degree in only 4 years. He cares so much about my work and that I am set-up for success, which resulted in me trying my best and work harder than I thought I would be able to.

I also want to thank my family, for whom it is not easy to have a daughter that lives thousands of miles away, but needless to say that I have received endless support and pep-talks. Last, but not least, I want to thank my boyfriend, who had to endure me while I was stressed about school and work. He always told me, everything will be fine, and in the end, it sure was.

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Introduction

Having a bachelor's degree, as well as acquiring a master's degree, unfortunately, does not automatically mean that you will get a good paying job. In fact, professional experience can even be more important. However, the combination of a degree and professional experience can get you where you always wanted to be, which in my case is into the production offices of one of the nation's top advertising agencies.

The need for more professional experience was the spark of my capstone idea, thus I tried my best to get an internship or job before the spring semester 2018 started. The hard work paid off, as I got a position as Partner Solution Manager for Pinterest, at Marketstar in Ogden UT.

Even though I initially got hired as Partner Solution Manager, I acquired a different job title based on the certification scores which we received after four weeks of training. Generally, there are four different teams: Partner Manager, Embedded Account Manager, Partner Manager Agency, and Account Manager Agency.

The duties of a Partner Manager (PM) on the direct side are to find new partners who are the right fit for advertising on Pinterest. This process consists of a discovery phone call where the PM gets as much information as possible; if the advertiser agrees to advertise on Pinterest, the Partner Manager will create an initial advertising strategy, and will help set up campaigns. Once the campaigns have ran through a testing phase, the Embedded Account Manager (eAM) comes into play. He or she will then analyze the campaigns based on data from AdsManager, the native advertising tool of Pinterest, to figure out which campaigns are performing well and which are not. Based on the conclusions, he or she will give optimization recommendations to the partner. The agency side looks quite similar. However, the Partner Manager on the agency

side is not directly talking to an advertiser, but rather an agency who has several

clients/advertisers.

  In addition to the four teams, there are the Account Managers, who get accounts which

are harder to scale (increasing budget), which means that they need more time to create a

strategy that will increase their performance and eventually get the partner to spend more money.

Because I received a high score during certification, I got sent to this team.

  To report on my professional experience, I focused on one client where I could apply my

knowledge gained from training and from my communication degree. For this partner, I created a

strategy, which can be found in the appendix. Once the campaigns were running I had to

optimize the account towards my partner's goals. Lastly, I reported on what I have learned from

this experience, and how it will help me to be successful in my future career.

Literature Review

The literature reviewed for this professional experience falls into three different categories. Each of the categories is part of the job of an Account Manager. By reviewing this literature, not only did I gain factual knowledge, but it also provided me with guidance on how to successfully get the job done.

Pinterest

One has to understand the core values of the company one is working for, in order to be successful in the job. In this case, the company is Pinterest, the world's catalog of ideas. Even though Pinterest is considered social media, it is fairly different than all other social media platforms. Jon Kaplan (2018), the Head of Global Sales for Pinterest in San Francisco, said it right when he described Pinterest as the platform where "it is all about yourself, and not your selfie". But, what does that mean?

People go on Facebook to see what their friends and families are posting. Instagram has a constant competition going on of who posts the best and most beautiful picture to show how awesome their lives are. Snapchat shows you short videos of yet another party your friends attended. All these platforms show you what others are doing, and the main value proposition is to be entertained. However, on Pinterest people can discover solutions for different events of their lives; if these are everyday moments, like finding the right snack for work, or the big life moments like having a baby. By pinning to one owns board, the users can discover their taste and "refine their vision of what looks good together in any given taste regime" (Phillips, Miller, & McQuarrie, 2014, p. 647). Because of this discovery of new ideas, a user is in a completely different mindset, then he or she is on other platforms. Pinners come to Pinterest early in their

decision making process, but in the end, all of them are there to find something to do or to buy, thus Pinterest has the highest commercial intent out of all the platforms (Kaplan, 2018).

There are two ways Pinners can discover new ideas on Pinterest, through the home feed, or through search. When using the home feed the user has a more laid-back experience since he or she will be presented with pins that match his or her interests. The interests were defined when the user set up the profile, as well as through the dynamic learning of the platform based on a user's searches. The other discovery method is the search feed, where a user can discover new ideas based on keywords he or she is putting into the search field. An advantage for advertisers is that 97% of all the searchers are unbranded, which means that a user might search for "skinny jeans", and not "Levis," which, again, represents the early status of the decision-making process (Pinterest, 2018). Another great advantage for businesses is that 70% of all the content that exists on Pinterest comes from brand's websites, which is possible through the Pinterest browser extension.

What does this mean for advertisers? Advertisers can have their products be part of Pinterest by promoting pins, but these pins will not be interfering with the user's experience and will not seem annoying since they look exactly like the organic content that is already present on Pinterest. The content that is shown in an open ad slot, is defined through an auction. The auction takes into consideration the amount an advertiser is willing to bid, but also how likely it is that a user will click on the ad. Pinterest will not show irrelevant content from an advertiser to a user (Advertising fundamentals, 2017). To ensure that the content is relevant, the ad has to go through an approval process, where a team in Dublin and San Francisco manually checks all the advertising, and eventually approves it or disapproves based on the pin, the keywords, interests, etc.

To make an ad as successful as possible an advertiser can create campaigns with different strategies and that is where the Account Manager at Pinterest comes into place. An Account Manager will help an advertiser set up campaigns, and once they are launched he or she will dig through the data to optimize the accounts to their full potential.

Previous Studies on Pinterest

Since Pinterest is such a young platform, previous studies are hard to find, and the ones that do exist are most often outdated. The platform is evolving and improving fast. It is a challenge to work for a company like this since it seems that whatever I learned a week ago is almost outdated the following week.

However, a recent study conducted by Voorveld, Van Noort, Muntinga and Bronner (2018), examined how users engage with advertising from different social media platforms and essentially how the user feels about the embedded advertising. Unlike other researchers, Voorveld et al. (2018) do not believe that it is the content of the advertising which drives engagement, but rather the context or in other words, the platform where the advertising is presented. Thus, the main goal of the study was to find out more about the relationship between engagement with advertising and the context of the platform to support their claim. The following results about Pinterest have emerged from the research. Pinterest received the highest score when it came to stimulation because the user experience is unique and offers something unknown. Voorveld et al. stated, "Pinterest was enjoyable and relaxing, and it gave users practice tips, ideas, and advice, motivating them to visit a shop or to search for more information" (p. 46). This comment indicates that if advertisers can provide unique content that makes users feel enthusiastic and offer useful tips, Pinterest will be the right fit. However, Pinterest scored low on social interaction, thus if advertisers want to post content suitable for sharing, they should make

use of a platform like Facebook rather than Pinterest (Voorvel et al., 2018). The research also

showed that users felt the least distracted by advertising, more so, only 12% of the research

subjects indicated they saw advertising on Pinterest. This statement refers back to the fact

mentioned earlier, about how well the advertising content fits into the native content on Pinterest,

since 70% of the content already is from business websites, and this leads to a more positive

evaluation of advertising from the user's perspective.

  An article from March 7th from the advertising trade publication *AdWeek* confirms the

statements written above which mentioned that people find advertising less distractive on

Pinterest and Instagram. Townsley (2018) from *AdWeek* says that people look on these two

platforms for inspiration and are a "welcomed alternative to Facebook's status updates, political

rants, and personal milestones" (Townsley, 2018, pp. 2). The following three reasons are why

advertising on the two platforms works. First, both of the platforms are interest based; on

Pinterest, you define your interests and on Instagram, they are defined by what you are

following. Second, people have more of a shopping-mindset when visiting the platforms,

whereas Facebook is more of a hangout place. *AdWeek* mentioned, "selling stuff on Facebook is

like doing a sales pitch during a party while people are trying to have fun (or argue about

politics)" (pp. 7). Third, the content from Pinterest and Instagram is evergreen, meaning that a

post or Pin from one year ago for Christmas presents ideas, can still be useful the following year,

as long as the landing pages are still valid, and lead to relevant content. However, the content on

Facebook has a rather short shelf life and is hard to find after a few days (Townsley, 2018).

Despite the similarities the two platforms share, there are still distinct differences when it comes

to the motivation of why people use Instagram, as shown in the research conducted by Lee, Lee,

Moon, and Sung (2015).

Lee et al. (2015) were interested in people's social motives on why they share on Instagram. The results of the study were created through surveys as well as through a content analysis of previous literature and bloggers (Lee et al., 2015). This research resulted in five different motives, the first being social interaction. By using Instagram, users try to connect to people with similar interests and earn social support. The second motive is to archive and basically create a visual online diary. Third, people use it to express themselves, and sometimes it is easier to express oneself through a picture than it is through words. The last two motives are escaping and peeking. Users are trying to escape into a virtual world where they can connect to people they have never met before but seem to understand them. They can connect or follow celebrities and get a sneak-peek into their glamorous lives (Lee et al., 2015). Motive number one makes Instagram quite different from Pinterest. Even though you can share pins with others on the platform, it is mainly used for self-concerned purposes.

A study conducted three years ago by Ferguson and Greer (2015), focused on how Pinterest is used by television stations in their media mix to create brand awareness and connect with their audiences. It is easy for larger corporations like HGTV or the Food Network to create content on Pinterest that does not necessarily talk about their brand because they are already well-known, but it is much harder for local news stations to post engaging content that still replicates them. Since Pinterest focuses mainly on lifestyle-related content, only a fourth of the boards that were part of the research actually focused on news and only a fifth of the boards promoted the TVs station themselves (Ferguson & Greer, 2015). The boards that promoted the stations had a significantly lower number of re-pins than the ones showing lifestyle-related content. The fact that lifestyle images get more re-pins shows that, even though it is important

for the brands or stations to get their names out there, it is better to do it in a tasteful way, for example by having a small logo on a lifestyle-related image.

The Optimization Process

Advertisers use Pinterest to make money, and the same holds true the other way around. Pinterest will receive money from advertisers, and it is the Account Manager's job to spend this money in the most efficient way because if the advertisers do not see any success on their end, they will stop spending money on the platform.

Thus, an Account Manager has to come up with a working strategy that will drive success for the specific advertiser. Because Pinterest differs so much from other platforms, as indicated earlier, there are not any industry best practices. However, there are Pinterest best practices, which are constantly updated by a team working in San Francisco. These documents are what help me and other Account Managers set up strategies and go through an account to find optimizations to make. In the end, though, Pinterest is a test and learn platform, where one has to try a new way of advertising, give it some time, and then decide from there if it was successful or not. The process of setting up a new advertising strategy includes the following aspects: the setup, targeting, creative, measurement, and optimizations.

Setup

Every setup for an advertiser consists of a campaign; a campaign can have multiple ad groups, and an ad group can have multiple pins (See Appendix - Figure 1). The type of campaign depends on the advertiser's objective, such as driving awareness, driving traffic to the website, or growing online sales. It is important to specify the type of campaign because the campaign type then defines what buying mechanism is used in the auction. Throughout all the levels of the

campaign, there should be a consistent theme include the naming of the attributes, which will

make it a lot easier to analyze the data once the campaign is running.

On the campaign level, the budget is set which is determined by the advertiser and how

much he or she is willing to spend daily or over a certain time period. In order to get enough data

to work with, it is recommended to spend at least $50 per day per ad group, where the bids is set

as well. The native advertising tool of Pinterest will give suggestions of how high the bid should

be based on what other advertisers are bidding in the same vertical or category of interest.

However, it is recommended to start with a 10-15% higher bid to guarantee delivery (Ads

Manager Guide, 2017). Also determined by the ad group is the targeting, which is covered in the

next section.

Targeting

As mentioned earlier, there are two ways a Pinner can experience pins, through the home

feed, and through search. Thus, one can also target these specific places. If an advertiser wants to

create awareness and reach as many people as possible, then all placements should be targeted,

especially the home feed. When sales are the goal of an advertiser, it is better to get qualified

(meaning that the user is more committed to buying) clicks to the website, and this is achieved

by only targeting the search feed, where a user is more committed to finding something he or she

will buy or do. To target the home feed, interests are being set, and when targeting the search

feed, keywords are set (The Manual, 2018).

Creative

Creatives will be covered in a different section of this literature review since it is one of

the most important aspects of the solely visual platform. Not only are there visual best practices,

but it is also important for an Account Manager to have a thorough understanding of visual

literacy.

Measurement

  To measure if Pinterest actually does drive more sales on the advertiser's end the

Pinterest Tag should be implemented on the partner's website. The tag is a piece of Java-Script

code that will measure different types of conversion events, such as "Add to Cart", "Checkout",

"Sign Up", etc. (MacMannis, 2017). This tag runs on an attribution window of 30/30/1. This

means that Pinterest will get credit if someone converts within 30 days after clicking on an ad, 30

days after engaging with an ad, such as saving or closing up on it, and 1 day after viewing an ad.

Unfortunately, many advertisers nowadays use the model of last-click-attribution because it has

shown great success on platforms such as Facebook and Google. This model does not work for

Pinterest because users are in the discovery mindset and often think twice before making a

purchase (MacMannis, 2017).

Optimization

  Once the campaigns have been running for a week the Account Manager goes back in

and scales where possible, and optimizes where the performance is bad. The first step in the

optimization process is to check if the running advertising campaigns are meeting the advertiser's

goal, such as an x Return on Ad Spend (ROAS), or x$ Cost per Acquisition (CPA), and if the ad

groups are spending the set budget. The goal depends on the advertiser's business objectives. For

example, if their goal is to drive sales, they usually work with a CPA goal. Below is a graphic

with the optimization levers which guides the Account Manager through the optimization

process.

In this graphic, CTR stands for click-through rate which is the indicator of how many people clicked through to the website after viewing a pin. CVR stands for conversion rate and this is the indicator of how many people actually converted or bought
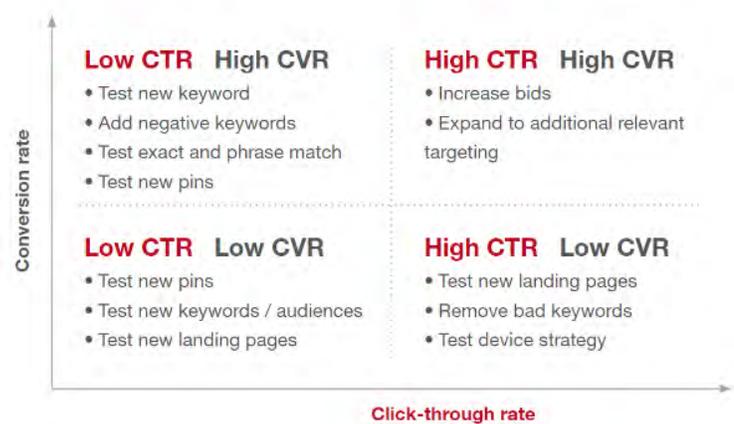
something after viewing, engaging, or clicking on a pin (The Manual, 2018). This graphic only focuses on optimizing; however, if a campaign is hitting goal and hitting budget we actually like to scale, which in the end means to ask for more money. Even though advertising is all about money, it is still a sensitive topic to talk about, which will be covered in the client communication section. But before we get into the communication aspect, the most important part of Pinterest will be covered – the creative.

The Visual

Despite the new function of having hashtags on Pinterest, advertising and brand identity is created through visuals. Thus, one has to have an understanding of color palettes, backgrounds, visual shapes, and photos. Based on an advertiser's goal, there are different best practices; however, in general, a pin should be helpful, beautiful and actionable (Pinterest, 2018).

Visual Literacy

Before we can get into more depth of what needs to be done on Pinterest, it is also important to understand the basics of visual literacy. According to Messaris (2012), too many researchers have been seeing images as "just" another language and dismissing the unique characteristics images bring. For instance, verbal language needs prior knowledge in order to be

understood, whereas making sense out of images does not require prior experience because they are assembled based on real-world processes (Messaris, 2012). However, the persuasiveness of an image can easily be manipulated for example, by making something appear bigger by using different camera angles (Messaris, 2012). Manipulation of an image is just one of many factors of visual composition.

In fact, visual composition is the flesh and blood of a good image. Composition organizes the relationship of the objects within the image. Only through a great composition will the image effectively communicate (Campbell et al., 2013).

Images are organized by color, form, line, and movement. Of the four, color has the most power over the image because people are psychologically programmed to respond to colors in different ways, including how they are moved emotionally (Bakhshi & Gilbert, 2015). Therefore, depending on where you want the consumer to focus on, you want to adjust your colors accordingly. Red works to draw attention, often used in corporate logos as we can see with Coca-Cola, McDonald's, and H&M to name a few. On the other end of the spectrum is violet, which attracts the least amount of attention. A few more examples of how colors can impact an image are as followed: Blue can be used for coolness and melancholy, green to soothe, and gray can show the lack of emotional commitment. These examples show that color is a powerful tool for direct visual messages (Campbell et al, 2013). The research conducted by Bakhshi and Gilbert (2015), did not only focus on the power of color but also on how they drive human beings to how they act on social media. The results of the study have shown that black- and- white images are shared less than colored ones, and the main color of an image defines how much diffusion is driven (Bakhshi & Gilbert, 2015). The highest chance of being shared are the images where the colors red, purple and pink are dominating. On the other hand images that mainly including blue,

green, yellow and black have the least chance of being shared (Bakhshi & Gilbert, 2015). This research will help along the best practices for creating pins discussed in a later section.

The second component of the image's organization is form. The form is defined by how close or far away objects are placed within the frame. If two people are shown closer together in an image, the viewers feel as if they have a closer relationship. The farther the two people in the image are, the more distress and tension the viewer sees between them (Campbell et al., 2013).

Lines divide the picture within the frame. The lines can be visible such as a flagpole or they can be invisible such as a look between two people. According to Campbell et al. (2013), "lines... help us understand spatial arrangement and the corresponding relationship with the visual narrative" (p. 59). Understanding the relationship between the objects within an image can help to create excitement and depth within a picture. Last, but not least, movement defines how we "read" a picture. Movement guides the eye through the image and because, in the western culture, we are trained to read from left to right it is important to place important information on the right (Campbell et al, 2013).

Another part of visual literacy is the semiotics or the study of signs. According to Paul Lester, a sign is something that has a deeper meaning than the object itself. He says it, "has meaning only when the signs are recognizable and can be related, through memory, to personal and cultural experiences" (Lester, 2006, pp.18). The study of semiotics originated in a more linguistic context, but since then has been applied to many fields, including visual communication (Panzaru, 2012). However, Panzaru (2012) argues that an image is most powerful when combined with text. He says "without visual images, an idea may be lost in a sea of words, [but] without words, an image may be lost to ambiguity" (p. 409). Panzaru states that when there is a text-overlay within an image it is still seen as a visual entity, thus considered a

image. Because images evoke emotions and affect our attitudes, they can engage our

imaginations by stimulating certain parts of our brains. In advertising, visuals can help to paint

the picture of what the brand stands for and thus influence the user's decision-making (Panzaru,

2012). Overall, "every choice a creator makes in terms of framing, content placement,

manipulation, and textual mooring affects the way the image operates in our social discourse"

(Campbell et al., 2013, p. 76). In addition to the image compositions just mentioned, it is

important to understand what context surrounds the image. In the case of Pinterest, the image

description and text overlay can help set this context. Many advertisers who want to advertise on

Pinterest have already advertised on Google and Facebook; they need to understand that they

cannot use the same visuals for Pinterest as they are using for the other platforms.

Guidelines and Policies

     In addition to having the basic knowledge of visual literacy advertisers also have to be

aware of the guidelines and policies set by Pinterest. The basic guidelines are that the pin should

be vertical in format, it should be optimized towards mobile (since 80% of the users access

Pinterest on their phone), it should play with motion, use text overlays, and contain tasteful

branding. Additionally, Pinterest suggests having different types of creatives depending on the

advertiser's goal.

     The best practices for advertisers who want to create awareness is to have pins with

motion such as video pins, beautiful imagery, message focused on brand attributes, and long

descriptions. If the goal is to not only create awareness for the brand but to also drive

consideration for buying a certain product, "how-toes" or lists should be used, the logo should

be consistently used in the same place, and have instructive text overlay. Last, if the goal is to

drive sales the advertiser should use rich pins that include the product price, use multi-image

shots, and have a stong call to action in the text overlay and the description (The Manual, 2018).

In addition to knowing the best practices, there are several policies to follow. All

promoted pins on Pinterest need to be authentic meaning that there cannot be any artificial

functioning buttons that say something like play or download since they are misleading. They

also need to be positive and aspirational, thus inappropriate language will not be accepted as well

as any pictures that suggest deficiencies such as before-and-after weight loss shots. There are

sensitive categories that are not allowed to be targeted in advertising at all. These categories

include sensitive health and medical conditions, racial or ethnic origin, negative financial status

or conditions, and sexual behavior or orientations (Pinterest Policy, 2018). It is important for an

Account Manager to be familiar with all the policies Pinterest has put in place because if a pin

gets rejected the Account Manager has to be able to explain to the partner why this has

happened.

Client and Team Communication

By understanding the Communication Accommodation Theory (CAT) it is easier to find

the appropriate way to communicate to people you are working with, no matter if these are team

members or the Account Manager's advertising partners.

CAT

The basic definition of the Communication Accommodation Theory as defined by

Gallois and Giles in 1998 was that speakers adjust their communication based on their desire to

keep up a positive personal identity and their perception of the listener's communicative

characteristics (Gasiorek & Giles, 2015). There are two parts to the CAT - convergence, and

divergence. According to Giles, Mulac, Bradac, and Johnson (1987) convergence happens when

people try to find similarities in their ways of speaking in order to identify with each other, and

divergence is when people emphasize the differences between them, in order to create a

perception of power. Convergence is closely related to Burke's concept of language study, and

how language can be used to persuade people to act as the speaker would like them to act

(Hordila & Pana, 2010). This concept of convergence, essentially, can be a huge benefit for an

Account Manager, since he or she has to persuade a partner to invest more money, only through

communication.

In its earlier years the accommodation of communication was often referred to as the

adjustment of language so that it matches the fellow speaker's speech, such as tone and speed;

however, according to Gasiorek and Giles (2015) this phenomenon of accommodation has

shifted in more recent years, now also including factors such as verbal and nonverbal attributes.

In their research, they have covered how over-accommodation can lead to non-accommodation

as it is perceived from the listener's point of view (Gasiorek & Giles, 2015). In other words, the

speaker tries too hard to accommodate to the listener and is thus perceived negatively. The same

holds true for trying to under-accommodate. In the example of client communication, the

Account Manager has to adjust the level of complexity when talking about Pinterest, according

to the advertiser's prior knowledge.

In a research conducted by Chevalier, Watson, Barras, and Cottrell (2017), they talked

about the importance of good communication in the healthcare profession. However, the findings

of this research can also be applied to the job of an Account Manager, since he or she achieves

his or her goal of getting more money for advertising solely through communication. Chevalier

et al. (2017) state in their research that CAT proposes that an individual's communication is

driven by the preferred outcome. To achieve the wished-for outcome the speaker uses strategies

to accomplish the goal and these strategies are approximation, interpretability, discourse

management, emotional expression and interpersonal control (Chevalier et al., 2017).

Approximation is concerned with the adjustment of tone, pitch, dialect, and other speech

patterns; this is where a person can mimic more closely (converge) or emphasizes differences in

the use of language (diverge). When using appropriate interpretability both communicators make

sure that the words that they are using are understood, thus focusing on the person's

conversational competence. Discourse management regulates an intact conversation so that there

is enough back and forth, and changes of topic as needed. Emotional expression is provided if

there is enough empathy towards the person speaking to, and understanding their emotional

needs. Last, but not least, interpersonal control regulates the power relations between speakers

(Chevalier et al., 2017).

Whereas some of these strategies seem to be working better for the job of an Account

Manager, none of them should be dismissed. In a phone conference with a partner the Account

Manager might have to adjust his or her language based on the partner's culture (approximation);

both parties should not be using too much jargon and if used the meaning should be

communicated (interpretability); one person should never talk more than two consecutive

minutes (discourse management); talking about budget is a sensitive topic, thus the Account

Manager has to carefully phase his or her sentences when asking for more budget (emotional

expression); and last, despite the fact that the Account Manager has more knowledge about

Pinterest he or she should never talk down to a partner (interpersonal control).

Whereas these examples were all focusing more on convergence and creating a social

relatedness, divergence is concerned with how to differentiate oneself from others to create

social distance (Hordila & Pana, 2010). If used in an appropriate way, divergence can be useful in team communication, which brings me to the next topic of radical condor.

Radical Condor

The manager of our team, Kayla Davis, introduced us to the practice of radical condor which states that one should "care personally and challenge directly" (Radical Condor, 2018). What that means is that one should say what one thinks while also considering the listener's feelings. In this case, we are creating a social distance (divergence) from a specific topic. By not being too close, we can identify bad outcomes more easily and communicate them to our team members.

The problem often though is that people have been told since they are young that if they do not have anything nice to say they should not say it at all, which often leads to not communicating if they do not agree with something that is going on at work. In addition, one should always be professional, but as the author of Radical Condor (2018) states," too often, that's the code for leaving your humanity at home". If you want to build a strong relationship you have to be yourself at work (Radical Condor, 2018). Being authentic is especially important for our team because we have to challenge each other when it comes to creating new strategies or optimizing accounts. If we would just agree with everything others do, we would never find new innovative ways to bring our partner's success on the platform, and essentially success for Pinterest.

Method and Results

The objectives of an Account Manager's job are to get a positive Return on Advertising Spend (ROAS) or a low Cost per Acquisition (CPA) for the partner and get them to scale in order for Pinterest to make more revenue. Thus, this was also my personal goal for this capstone

experience, and to report this accordingly, I focused on one of my partners throughout the

method section as well as results section of this research. The steps I took to achieve this goal are

based on the literature described in the literature review, which includes best practices on setting

up campaigns, optimizing accounts, and communicating appropriately to the partner by using the

strategies described in the section of the Communication Accommodation Theory.

At the beginning of every quarter, an Account Manager is given a book of business with

partners that are currently spending on Pinterest or have in the last quarter. It is then the Account

Manager's job to go through the book of business and prioritize based on how much they are

spending, and the opportunities he or she is seeing in the account. For the purpose of this report

of my professional experience, I focused on one account in particular because the partner is a

great fit for the platform, and I had to start fresh, meaning that I had to set up a new strategy, get

new creatives going, and then optimize based on the data gathered throughout the testing period.

Account Analysis and Strategy Set Up

The partner I was working with belongs to the category of online retail and sells clothing

on his website. It is mainly men's clothing, with the exception of a few women's shirts, and

men's gift sets. The partner is not only the owner of the business, but he also acts as the model,

the marketer, and main contact, which turned out to be rather difficult when setting up a new

strategy and optimizing the account.

Before I could set up an account, I had to better understand my partners' business, and his

expectations, which I could get by setting up a call. During the call, he told me that he does not

know what his goal is specifically for Pinterest He said, he just wants to drive sales, thus I

suggested that we should be working towards a 2x ROAS, which means that for every dollar he

puts in he will get 2 dollars out of it. His available budget for March was $10,000. With this

information in hand, I started creating a strategy. The graphic below helped me to decide how many ad groups I should initially start with, which resulted in five ad groups because I had a little more than $300 per day to spend ($10,000 / 30 days).
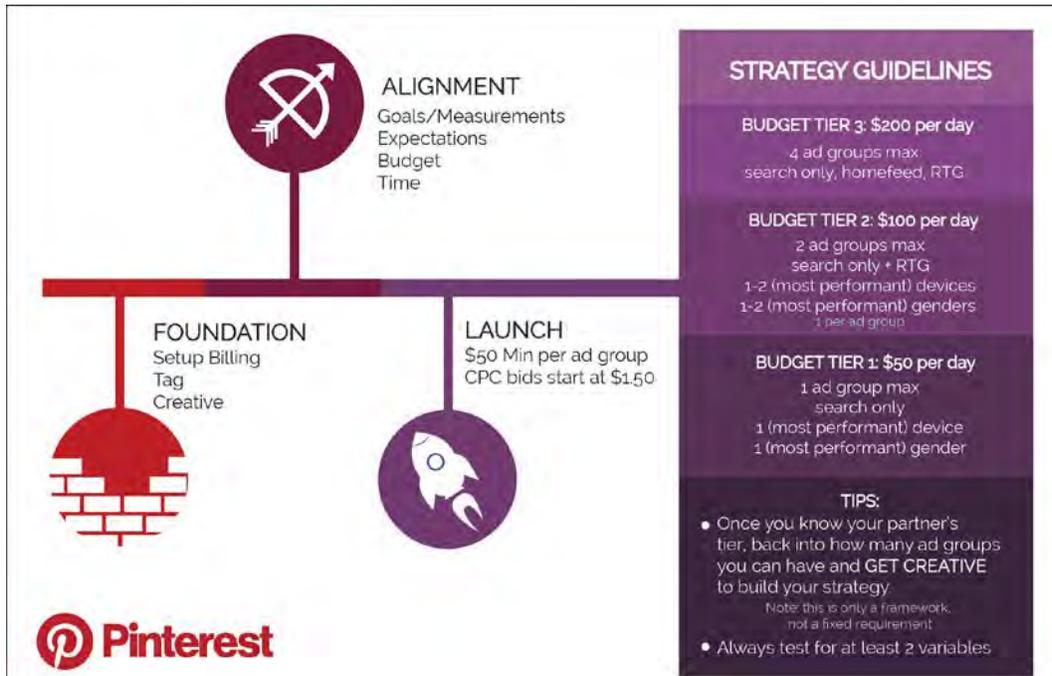
Following are the names and a short description of the ad groups, for the complete strategy document refer to Appendix A - Figure 2.

- Ad group 1: Interests | Men | All Devices | US, CA, UK, AU

- Ad group 2: KW | Female, Male | Gifts for Him | All Devices

- Ad group 3: KW | Male | Casual Wear, Graphic Tees | All Devices | US, CA, UK, AU

- Ad group 4: KW | Vests, Blazer | All Devices | US, CA, UK, AU

- Ad group 5: RT | 30 Day Site Visitors, 30 day Engagement

In addition to setting up the ad groups, I had to get creatives from my partner which follow the guidelines from the ad policy. In the past, it happened that his images got rejected because of vulgar language. Thus, I told him we should only take images that feature bare

clothing, and for the graphic tee ad group we decided to go with a shirt that says "Tequila at Sunrise".

Once he confirmed this strategy, I had to put everything into a bulk sheet (See Appendix - Figure 3), which essentially is an excel sheet that allows you to upload a big amount of information at once. The excel sheet is then uploaded under a tab in Ads Manager. After a successful upload, the campaign had to run for a week to get enough data before I could start optimizing the account.

Account Optimization

Account Optimizations were based on guidelines offered in the Pinterest Manual (2018) and personal judgment. When optimizing an account, I have to access an internal tool named Cooper, which provides you with data from the partner's account. It is comparable to Google Analytics which is used by most advertisers; however, through Cooper, you also have access to Pinterest specific data such as how many times a Pin was saved, how many Pinners clicked on it to get to the close-up view, or how many actually clicked through to the website. These engagements are unique to Pinterest since no other platform has the same kind of format. The guidelines list following optimization levers: test new keywords, add negative keywords, test exact and phrase match keywords, new pins, increase the bid, expand to additional targeting (such as location, gender, or devices), test new landing pages, and remove bad keywords. The decision on what optimization levers should be used are based on how many conversions were made if the daily budget was reached, and the click-through-rate of the pins, which is based on how many people clicked through to the website after seeing the ad.

After the campaign ran for a week, I saw that the daily budget was reached in almost all of the ad groups, but no conversions have happened. This is an indicator that the bids should be

lowered. When bids are lowered the ad can be served more, thus reaching more people, which

then increases the likelihood of a person converting. I gradually decreased the bids day after

day, just until I could still guarantee delivery. The following graphic and mathematic formula

helped me decide on how much the bid should be lowered each time. The eCPM is the deciding

factor in an auction. The higher the eCPM is the better the delivery will be. CTR stands for

Click-Through-Rate, and CPC stands for Cost-Per-Click, which essentially is guided by the bid.

If a partner has a good CTR, and the eCPM is above $2, then the bid can be lowered.
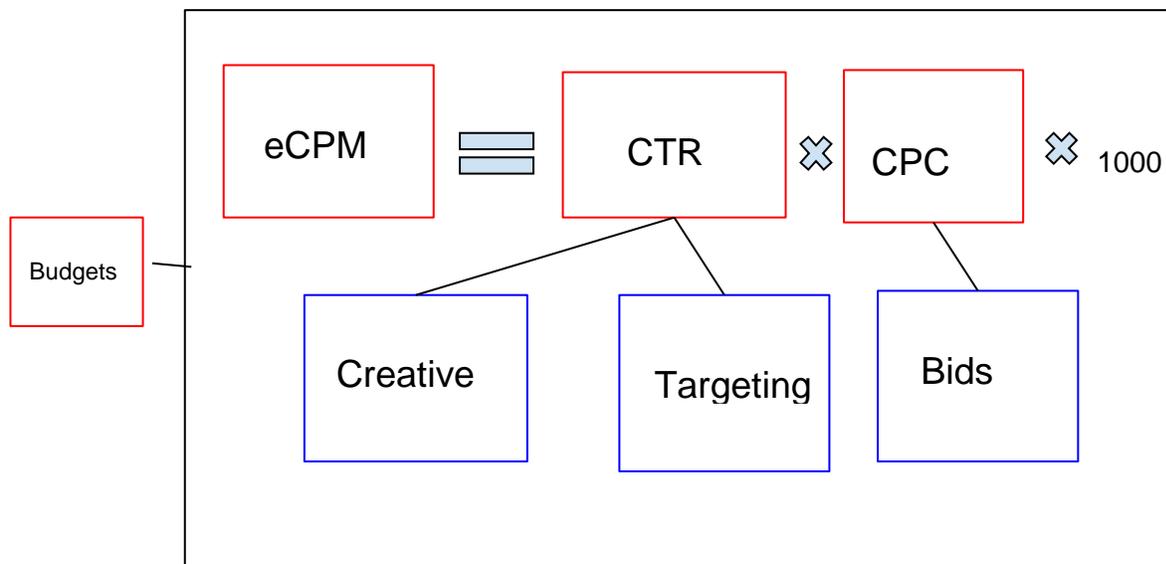
A few days later I still saw no conversions. That was when I realized that the Pinterest

Tag, which tracks conversions, was not implemented correctly. I tried to get him to talk to

Shopify, which is an e-commerce platform for online retailers. Shopify was supposed to

implement the tag correctly, but obviously failed. Eventually, my partner created a guest account

for me, where I was able to go in and fix the code.

 Once, the code was fixed we saw a few conversions coming in, but still not enough to give him

a positive ROAS. The next optimizations I made, were to stop targeting women because it has

shown that women are not converting. Also, there were keywords that got a lot of spend (budget spend towards) but did not show any conversion, thus I deleted these keywords.

After a little bit more than two weeks, I suggested to add a few more pins, and only target the Search Feed. This should have been in my strategy since the very beginning; however, my partner said he wants to have exposure, which is guaranteed when targeting all placements, meaning to target the Home Feed and the Search Feed. Because of the Search Feed_Only targeting, I had to create a new campaign, and within the new campaign one ad group. I launched this new ad group on a Friday, and already on Monday, three conversions have happened.

During the last week of March, we received our book of business for the next quarter (Q2), which means we had to start our account planning. This process involves looking through the accounts and making an educated guess on how much they will spend during Q2 based on opportunities we see. For example, one of my partners is selling wedding dresses, and since the wedding season is right around the corner, I can assume that they will start spending more on advertising.

Even though we have not seen a positive return with my partner, I assumed he wants to keep spending in Q2, which will put him at a $30k budget for the whole quarter. However, on March 29th, I received an email saying that he wants to freeze all of his campaigns right now. I tried to convince him to keep the best performing ad group running and only target the devices where we saw a positive ROAS. Unfortunately, he never emailed me back, thus I had to turn everything off. This, ultimately, means that I lost $30,000 out of my book of business for next quarter, and if I want to hit my goal, I will have to find other ways with different partners to get them to spend more money.

Partner Communication

As mentioned above, the communication to the partner was not always easy. No doubt, he knows how to run a business, but when it comes to setting up campaigns on Pinterest and tracking conversion, he has little to no knowledge. However, by following the five strategies of CAT - approximation, interpretability, discourse management, emotional expression and interpersonal control – I achieved my wished outcome of getting him to spend $10,000 in the month of March, and drive conversions on his website (Chevalier et al., 2017). During calls, I adjusted my speech patterns to mimic those of my partners more closely, such as talking in a more relaxed way and integrating small-talk into the business talk. For example, talking about his products and telling him that I would love if my boyfriend would wear his clothing.

To enhance interpretability, I kept Pinterest jargon to a minimum, and if used it, I explained what I meant with it. For example, at Pinterest, we often refer to the Pinterest Tag as pixel. Instead of saying pixel, I had to refer to it every time as Pinterest Tag. Also, I had to explain to my partner what a bulk upload is.

I had to realize that appropriate discourse management is rather hard with my partner since he likes to talk a lot, thus I had to make sure that everything is covered during the phone call that needed to be covered. By listening more than talking, I achieved greater emotional expression, which was shown through his gratitude towards me. He told me that so far I have been the best person to work with, and he would love his friend who sells barber products to work with me as well. Even though I cannot accept other partners, it was flattering to know that my work is appreciated.

Lastly, I never felt like we had to adjust power regulations between us like the strategy of interpersonal control suggests. However, it could easily have resulted in him feeling like he

has more power because of our age difference, and his extensive experience in the business

world.

      Because we had a really good relationship from the beginning and he showed trust by just

letting me do the changes for him, it took me by surprise when I received the email that he

wanted to turn everything off. What surprised me even more, was that he did not even email me

back when I made the suggestions to keep the advertising running that actually brought him a

profit. My goal is to give it some time, and then I will contact him by phone because it is more

personal, and I can get a better understanding of why he does not want to invest in Pinterest, and

hopefully, I can convince him otherwise.

Conclusion

      In conclusion, I wish I could say that I have brought my partner to huge success;

however, I had to realize that what I learned during training at the very beginning of my time at

Pinterest, is harder to apply than I thought. When I was setting up the strategy for my partner, I

was so confident it would drive many conversions after a short amount of time. In the end, I lost

it all, which shows me that I still have a lot to learn. For example, always starting with an ad

group that targets the Search Feed only, if the partner's goal is to drive conversions, and starting

to break down the targeting earlier in the process. For example, after two weeks see which

devices perform best and only target these devices until we see a positive ROAS. I also learned

that I need to set clearer expectations, such as having a clear goal and letting the partner know

that it will take a while until we see conversions. When it comes to the partner communication, I

need to communicate that I cannot and will not make all the changes for him. I got too excited at

the beginning that I have a partner who is willing to spend $10,000 in one month that I took

everything on, and literally made all the changes I recommended.

All these facts do not mean that I failed, but rather they will help me in the next quarter to be more efficient with my time. Also, my partner could have turned everything off after two weeks, since it did not drive the wished for conversions, but he did not. I would like to think that I achieved this through the way I communicated with him, which I learned through my time at Southern Utah University (SUU). In the end, I also had to learn to not take everything too personal. When my partner asked me to freeze everything after the four week period, the first thing I did is to question what I did wrong. I talked to my manager and she said I should definitely not blame myself. There are many factors that play into this job, and one big factor is luck. You could do everything right, and people still do not buy your partner's products, or your partner runs out of money, etc.

This professional experience, plus my time at SUU has taught me so many things; I gained knowledge and skills that will help me in my future career, I learned how to apply factual knowledge to real life experiences, it taught me how to stay disciplined and on top of things, it improved my writing and English skills immensely, and I learned that I cannot and will not succeed 100% of the time, but I will always keep trying. Through all this gained knowledge I am confident that I am set up for success in my future.

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Appendix

Figure 1 - Campaign Structure

Figure 2 - Campaign Strategy

Figure 3 - Bulk Sheet Example