Marketing Science Case Study

zynga.

The Challenge

Farmville, Words with Friends, Zynga Poker—chances are, if you play mobile games, you've played a game developed by Zynga. In fact, over a billion people have played at least one Zynga game, making the company one of the leading social gaming developers in the world. Since 2007, when it became the first game developer to partner with Facebook, Zynga has launched many games on the platform and grown its active monthly users to more than 85 million. But with that rapid growth has come challenges, especially related to scaling its marketing investment efficiently.

The Opportunity

Zynga chose Facebook as its core advertising tool to promote new games to a mobile audience and partnered with the Facebook Marketing Science team to adopt a strategy called "account simplification." By consolidating multiple ad accounts and campaigns, Zynga gained a holistic view of the performance of all of its ads. The signals for each ad set were combined, allowing the gaming company to take greater advantage of Facebook's advanced machine learning algorithms and improve campaign efficiency overall. Ultimately, by simplifying its accounts, Zynga was able to lower its cost per purchase action by 8%.

The Results

Reduced cost per purchase action by 8%

33% rise in their D1 yield (Day 1 return on ad spend)

Scaled investment efficiency by 1.9x with simplified account strategy

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How They Did It

Account simplification

Zynga was running over 40 different campaigns, each based on a different strategy, tactic or marketing approach. Through its work with Facebook Marketing Science, the company was able to consolidate its campaigns to fewer than 15, simplifying its fragmented account structure so that all iOS and Android campaigns and ad sets sit under one account. Campaign budget optimization (CBO) was used as a fundamental base across the new account structure, so that the company's campaign budgets were allocated according to bid strategy—whether that was lowest cost per purchase action (CPA) or highest return on ad spend (ROAS). Zynga grouped similar big strategies together, increasing the efficiency of each campaign.

Consolidating signals

Facebook Auction uses signals to inform its machine learning algorithms, which determine the best way to promote an ad. By consolidating accounts and campaigns, Zynga was also able to consolidate the signals fed into those accounts. This allowed the company to algorithmically refine ad sets much faster, moving them out of the learning phase as quickly as possible.

Moving out of the learning phase quickly

Consolidating accounts, and by extension, signals, Zynga was able to move its ad sets out of the learning phase much quicker than before. The machine learning phase is an important part of the process, but until the algorithm has learned enough about the best way to promote an ad—such as the right audience to target—ad performance can't be stabilized, and efficiency is not yet achieved. By enabling Zynga's ad sets to exit the learning phase quicker, Facebook Marketing Science was able to help the company realize performance improvements such as lower CPA and increased ROAS, allowing more ad spend to be allocated to the campaigns that deliver results most efficiently.

Account simplification is an ongoing effort. Feel free to reach-out to your Facebook Account teams and Marketing Science teams to identify ways to simplify your accounts/campaigns to further improve your business outcomes.

"Account simplification has been a very successful strategy for us. The test campaigns showed us we don't need to over-segment Ad Sets and helped us rethink how we continue to grow on Facebook. With a simplified approach, we increased return on investment while doubling (also increasing) spend and this contributed greatly to our marketing strategy by increasing Day 1 yields by 33% at 8% lower cost per purchase."

John Choi, Head of User Acquisition at Zynga

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