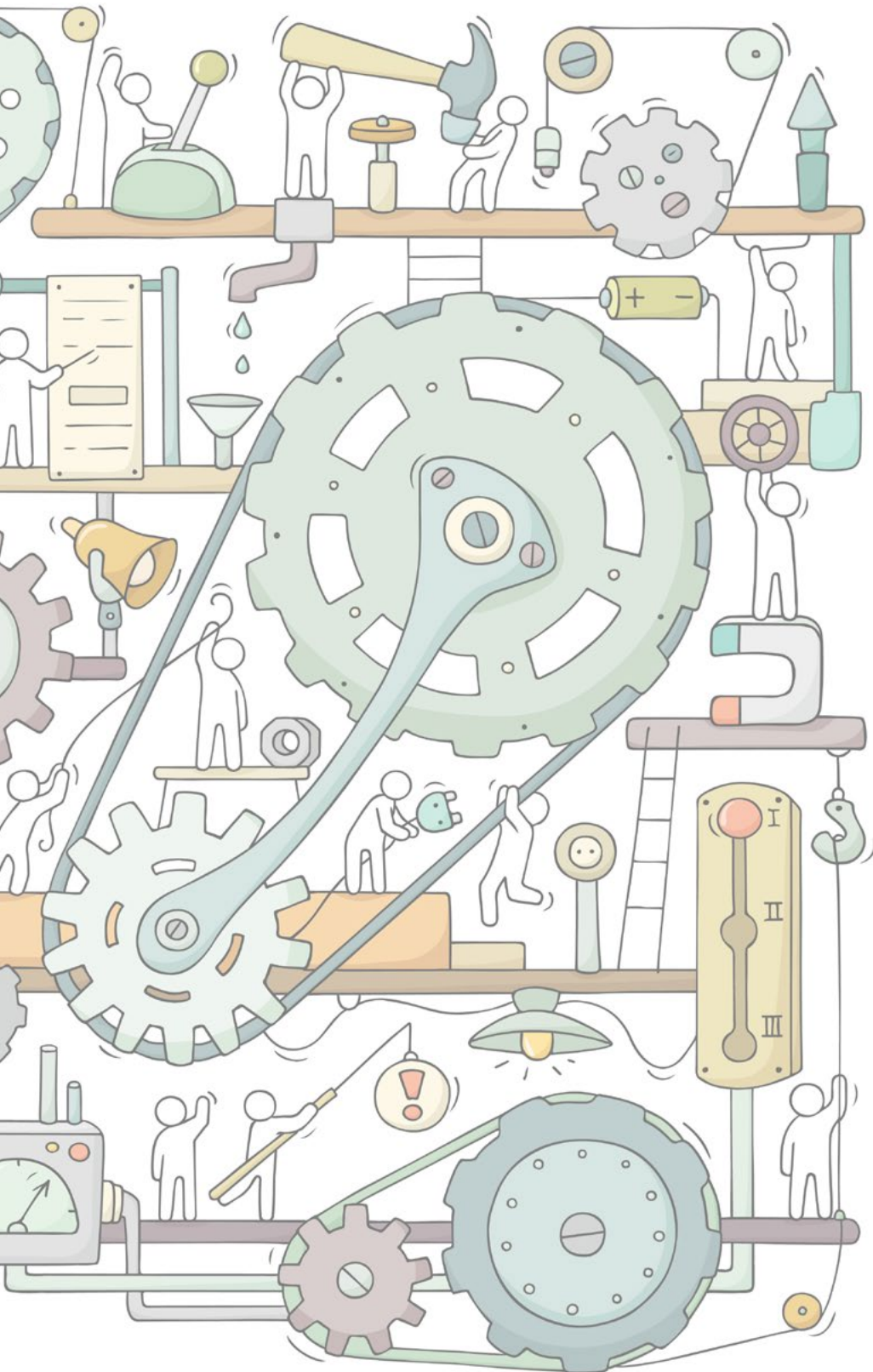


9 Penetrating Digital Marketing Insights for Today and Beyond

It's turning into a machine learning-driven world.



“Desire is irrelevant. I am a machine.”

- Terminator, circa 2003

Algorithms, AI, machine learning -- Every advertiser has to deal with them. You can run from them, but you cannot hide.

Their impact is all around us and growing every day. The world of code and desired outcomes in your marketing might be intimidating, but learning to work with them to achieve a desired outcome is what we do every day. Advertising algorithms are dominating the scene this year and will only grow in impact in the upcoming years.

Advertising is often about connecting -- connecting with the right people at the right time. The more you understand about the AI and algorithms in use around you, the more you can connect with your audience. Here at Zero Company, we believe the world needs more connecting.

Consider this a primer of some of the most recent trends that you need to be aware of in the upcoming year to keep your marketing heading in the right direction and connecting at a higher level. Let's jump into it!



INSIGHT 1: Automation will continue its strong stride

The more AI understands the roles of each touch point in the prospect's process and customer journey, the more prevalent and effective it will be. This is only natural given the amount of information we pass through algorithms and the ever-improving AI landscape. Our digital footprints are ever expanding and this connects to the improved accuracy now being brought on by Universal IDs and the Open Internet.



“The idea of a universal ID or open internet is going to change how we track conversions because now we actually know how much each touchpoint impacted that campaign.”

INSIGHT 2: Universal ID and the Open Internet can deliver more accuracy

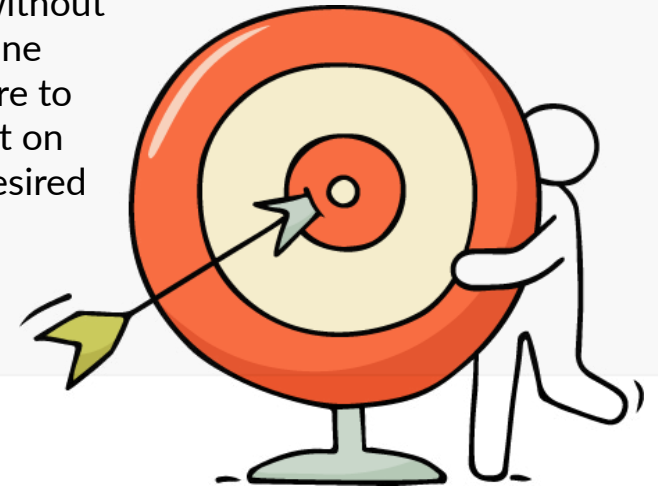
The idea of the open internet and a Universal ID is the hope that it can help us track conversions more accurately. Right now, at any moment between touch point one and seven, if Google touches a campaign, for example, it will likely take credit for that conversion regardless of the role other ad platforms may have played. With a Universal ID, we can better understand how each touchpoint along the process impacts a campaign. This is because the conversion funnel can be followed more meticulously.

We want to know the role every platform plays in a given marketing conversion and assign proper value to that role. As advertising goes through a transition to new forms of tracking, the hope is that tracking becomes more accurate while maintaining individual privacy. More accuracy means improved ROI.

INSIGHT 3: AI and GA4 fills the gaps left by cookies

More and more, people are opting out of getting cookie'd on certain websites. This has made it trickier to track audiences throughout the buying process or even just follow their digital footprint. With this, updates to analytics platforms are now on the horizon with Google Analytics 4, for instance, being the main one. Google is sunsetting your existing analytics, and if you haven't moved to their new GA4, you need to do so quickly.

Google now relies heavily on AI to fill those gaps and avoid losing key pieces of data. Currently, you may be getting 80% accuracy on the data you are viewing. The transition to GA4 can push that closer to 100%. It will work both with cookies and without cookies, and machine learning is at its core to help advertisers act on data and predict desired outcomes.



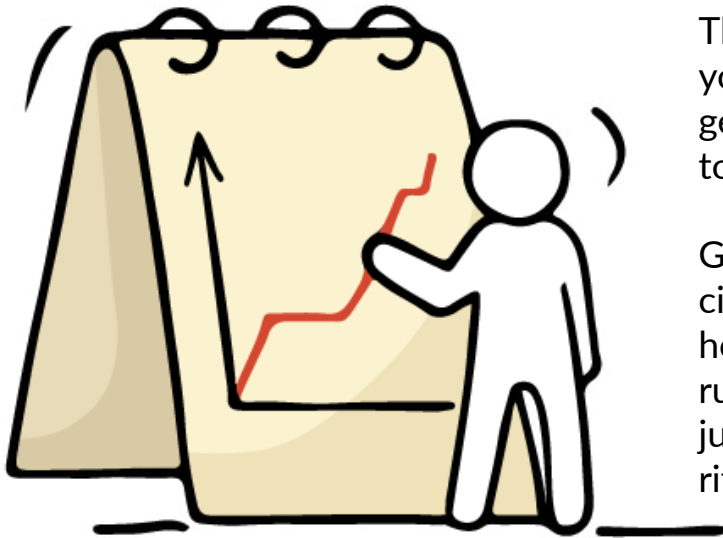
INSIGHT 4: AI can impact results for the better ... if used thoughtfully and methodically

Using AI solutions alongside non-AI solutions can still be very effective. Campaigns have to gather conversion data. Sometimes, a natural progression might be to create very tight, manually run campaigns, then as you've built enough data, expand them to algorithmic campaigns. Then, see how they react.

There are a variety of ways algorithms can go sideways from here. Often, you may find they have gradually taken you out of the ad auctions altogether. On the other hand, you may also decide to quit an algorithm test too early because the data hasn't looked good and you've lost confidence.

Google Performance Max campaigns, for instance, have been highly efficient instead of your normal keyword search ads. However, you have to hold your expectations, have patience, and be willing to let the algorithm run for a while. These campaigns use a variety of creative assets beyond just keyword searches. There are tips and tricks to speeding up the algorithm, but patience is still essential here.

Additionally, these campaigns can be prone to false positives. Yes, they got conversions, but check out the quality of these conversions. You may find an increase in spam, which has been a common problem. So don't just look at the quantity of conversions being reported, look at the quality.



INSIGHT 5: The keyword match rollercoaster ride will continue

Google's foundation was built on relevant keyword searches. Overtime, their algorithms have gotten smarter on matching keywords to relevant variations. But slowly, overtime, exact match keywords aren't an exact match. Phrase match keywords no longer need the phrase. Modified broad match recently was tossed aside altogether (there are signals they are thinking of sunseting exact match, too).

These technologies are improving over time. Broad match algorithms, for example, are starting to get even better in recent years. There are now cases where adding broad match keywords in specific instances has increased both traffic and conversions.

“Because of improvements in AI, Google has become smarter with keyword variations, so we don't have to target every keyword.”

For years, small to midsize advertisers may have avoided broad match keywords because of the underwhelming results, so this is a significant transition in the past year. These concepts also trickle over through SEO, the non-paid search activity. This also has something to do with the improvement of machine learning.



For example, the development of language understanding that Bidirectional Encoder Representations from Transformers (BERT) enables Google to match the intent behind queries to the right keywords. The improvement in keyword matching means that more relevant ads will be shown with your searches.

But these transitions have been anything but easy. Advertisers have had to be more vigilant than ever to stay on top of their keyword campaigns. More often, these days, you may not be aware your ads are appearing on different keywords than you are bidding on. The last two years of keyword match algorithms have been a rollercoaster ride.

Google will continue to push automation forward. AI bidding and automated campaigns are already becoming staples. Experiment. Identify how you're going to determine results and performance as you implement these strategies. Then test and retest to continually improve results.

It is important to take note that this can be difficult to do in instances when there's less data. Your tests will move slower. Conversion data must be kept clean or things go sideways fast. Understand, also that data may be influenced by multiple factors, many of which you may not necessarily be aware of early on (e.g. competition, stolen brand traffic, unknown placements, AI audience signals, and more). Regardless, it's important to be thoughtful and methodical as huge breakthroughs have been possible through the use of these new tools.

DIGITAL ADVERTISING PREDICTIONS:

5 additional insights that will impact the market today

Coming off 2022, we can expect that the continued development of machine-learning technology surely will impact your digital marketing campaigns and efforts. Here, then, are some additional insights to take note of going into the next year.

Connected TV (CTV) will continue to increase market share

In July 2022, video streaming surpassed the cable TV viewership in the US market for the first time. This is likely to continue because costs are expected to stay low or become even more stable given the growing inventory. More people are watching on streaming platforms, and Netflix is about to offer ad-supported options. This will translate to a lot more inventory in the long run.

Advertisers are welcoming this change. Now, users can be targeted based on sites they visited, psychographics, and all sorts of nuanced behaviors. More accuracy, means more relevant advertising and better ROI.

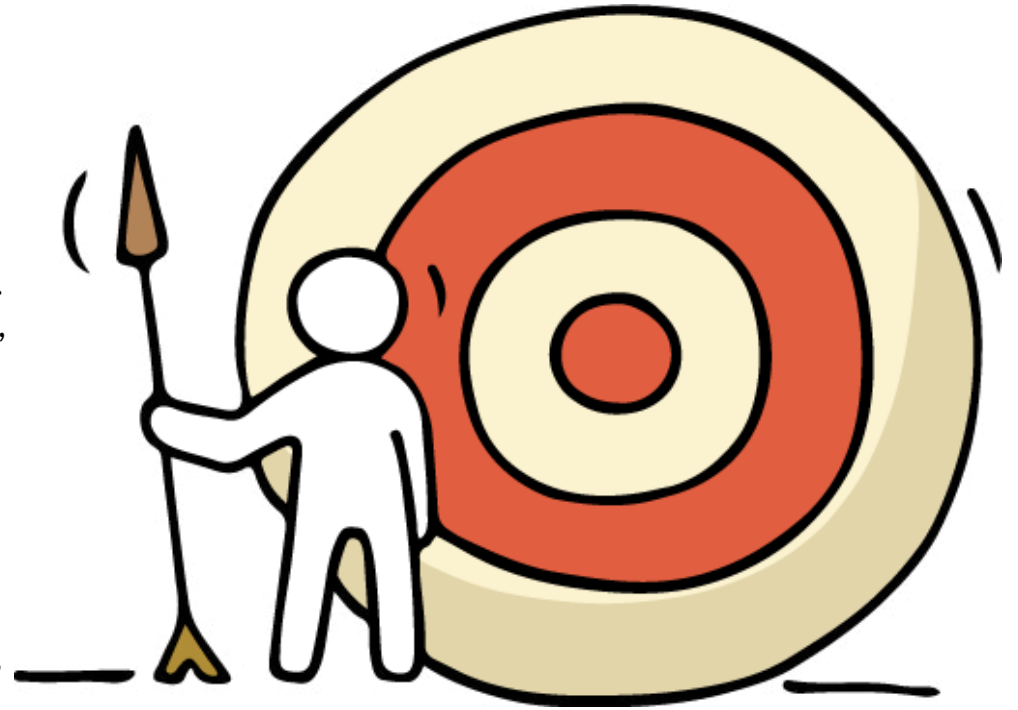


Geofencing will reemerge as a post-pandemic programmatic targeting option

Over the course of the pandemic, there was less usage of geofencing naturally because people were not going anywhere. However, the technology around geofencing continued to improve and we are now in a space where we can do geofencing much more easily than a couple of years back.

One of the biggest issues before is that data partners would ask for high minimums so they could guarantee their returns. Now, smaller advertisers can take advantage of these tactics, no longer needing the large minimums. They can even go back in time to look at a certain place and a certain date and use that to build audiences. The limitations only are your creativity and finding enough people to make a viable audience.

The advantages to geofencing will become even more apparent now that people are going back to normal routines, attending events and other gatherings. Look for the use of geofencing to create unique and substantial audiences to only increase going forward. (If you are in need of creative marketing ideas, these campaigns will bring some wow factor to the mix.)

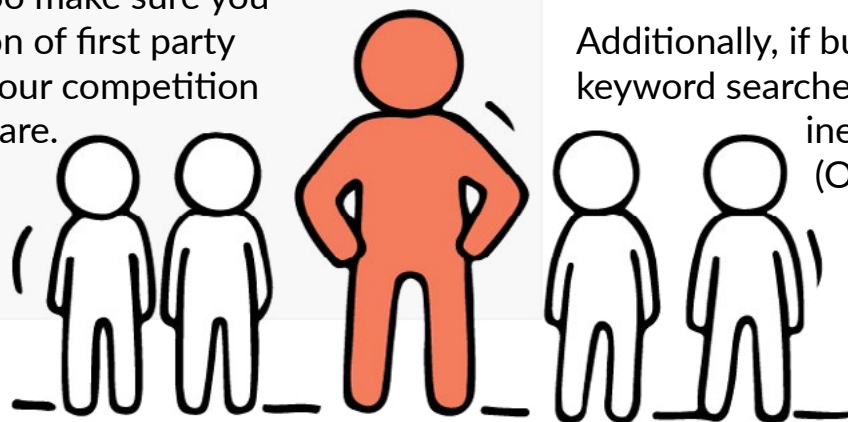


More clarification on third-party cookie deprecation

It still remains to be seen what technology will take the place of cookies. The use of Universal ID and Google Privacy Sandbox are ideas that have been thrown around but we still expect more clarification here.

Although it seems discussions on cookie deprecation are getting pushed back, it's best to stay up-to-date on the changes so that you can jump in at the right time.

Even if cookies are never deprecated, it's still imperative to improve at collecting first-party data: gathering email lists, emails for a newsletter or customer lead information. First party data can be leveraged in multiple ways, including building lookalike audiences. As AI improves, these lookalike audiences will bring better and better ROI. So make sure you have a strong foundation of first party data to keep ahead of your competition from stealing market share.



Custom intent audiences should be on your radar

Custom intent audiences are audience targeting tactics launched by Google that allow marketers to have more accurate targeting based on relevant keyword searches.

In a nutshell, this tactic allows you to reach users based on their recent searches, whether that's purchase-related keywords, competitor searches, or other creative search queries. It helps you build audiences based on keywords that your ideal customers use.

Approach it creatively. Think about the audiences that can come out of using custom intent. With some out-of-the-box thinking, many audiences that would have been impossible to target on Google can now be reached.

Additionally, if budgets are too tight to be competitive on keyword searches, you may be able to drive much more inexpensive traffic using this tactic. (Our clients have loved this addition to their marketing!)

Marketing leadership and flexibility will be key

Don't cut your budget in the wrong places! It's essential that leadership is able to navigate the fluid digital advertising challenges they will face.

Experienced marketing leadership is vital. Even if you don't have a full-time CMO at the helm, working with a fractional CMO can be a great option. If you have a smaller marketing budget or your startup is beginning to gain traction, the insights and experience of a marketing leader (even in a fractional manner) can make the journey smoother. Even larger organizations with CMOs can consult with a fractional CMO on tech stack, team structure, and other aspects outside of their organization's expertise and see considerable benefit to growth moving forward.

Timelines, requirements and best practices shift over time, so it's important to be prepared and ride the wave smoothly. This means staying on top of the leading edge of digital marketing. Marketing leadership and experience is vital.



Level Up Your Digital Marketing

The rapid growth of digital tools has altered the marketing and advertising landscape permanently. From AI and machine learning to analytics programs and new media platforms, there are many of new things to adjust to and implement as a marketer in today's fast-paced, multi-channel digital world.

Indeed, it's the rise of the machines.

While all of it may sound overwhelming, these technologies are being improved continuously for the benefit of advertisers and ultimately should create a seamless, highly relevant digital experience for your customers.

We share these insights and forecasts to help you have a firm grasp of the landscape in the coming months, and in the hope that you connect more with your ideal customers.

If you need help navigating the new AI and machine-learning world of advertising or simply want to bolster your strategies with the campaign elements discussed, get in touch! Our team of marketing experts are always ready to help you drive growth, produce results and get more WINS.

Stay ahead and [schedule a call today](#).

