
Digital Analytics for Political Campaigns

SPEAKEASY POLITICAL

overview

In fast-moving political campaigns, a key challenge is gathering and aggregating data to make informed optimization decisions. For example, should a campaign shift budget to increasing the frequency of their intro video, or route funds toward their fundraising-focused Facebook campaigns?

One of the best ways to make these decisions is to use your analytics to guide data-driven next steps. As campaigns quickly pivot strategies and make crucial calls about their digital media programs, the SpeakEasy team is here to help you answer the question: how do I effectively use digital ad analytics in my decision making?

digital media analytics jargon

To start, we know as well as anyone that there's a lot of jargon thrown around when talking about ad campaigns that isn't often used outside of the digital media space. We've put together a glossary of these terms to help you best interpret your digital ad performance - and make informed decisions about the next move for your paid advertising program.

Impression: An impression is the individual occurrence of your ad being shown online. A digital buy with 1,009,480 impressions will have been in front of voters 1,009,480 times. A strong campaign will ensure that each voter receives multiple impressions, building messaging frequency and increasing message recall.

CPM: CPM is an acronym for cost per mille (fun fact - mille means thousand in French, which is where the acronym stems from!) which equates to cost per 1,000 impressions. This is typically how ads are priced, so if you have a \$15,000 budget for a campaign and a \$10 CPM, you would expect 1,500,000 impressions.

Click Through Rate (CTR): The CTR measures the percentage of impressions that result in a click on your ad and a trip to the designated landing page. The formula is 'clicks' divided by 'impressions,' as a percentage. If your ad had 109,480 impressions and had 219 clicks, you would have a CTR of 0.2%.

Video Completion Rate (VCR): The VCR measures the number of times a user watched your entire video. The formula is 'views to 100%' divided by 'impressions,' as a percentage. Shorter videos - such as 6s and 15s - tend to have higher video completion rates.

Run Dates/Flight Dates: Run dates, sometimes called flight dates, are the days that your ad is being delivered to voters.

Audience Size: The audience size is the number of voters you have in your list that may see your ad. Once your list goes through either a cookie (individual voter-level) or IP (household-level) matching process, between 40-95% of your list will be accessible through online buying platforms, with not all voters being reachable online due to factors like ad blockers or outdated personal information.

Frequency: Frequency is the average number of times to expect that an individual voter will see the ad. You can calculate this by finding the expected impressions based on the CPM and dividing it by the expected audience size. The math looks like:

$$\text{FREQUENCY} = \frac{100,000 \text{ IMPRESSIONS}}{10,000 \text{ VOTERS} * .65}$$

(.65 represents the Audience Match Rate, which averages at 65% across platforms)

optimizing frequency with analytics

There is a delicate balance to strike between the many inputs that guide your digital ad program: impressions, run dates, budget, creative, and audience size. This balancing act is driven by both data and overall campaign objectives, and there are several ways that they can work together to optimize your campaign.

Successful campaigns keep a laser focus on frequency metrics. Generally speaking, you'll optimize toward a frequency that is high enough to be memorable to a voter, but low enough so that they are not inundated with the same ad over and over again. For example, a frequency of 20 over 2 weeks would be a strong showing, whereas a frequency of 20 in 2 days might become irritating to voters and start to create diminishing returns for your ad spend. From an optimization standpoint, if your frequency metrics are approaching the higher end of your targets, this could inspire a creative refresh (swapping in new versions of your ads), expanding the audience, or shifting budget to another channel with a lower frequency.

optimize, optimize, optimize

Another optimization that is often at play is the run time of the digital program. Most successful digital campaigns set at least a 5-day flight, increasing the lengths of the run as they change the audience, budget, or both. Not only does this give the media buyer more time to make optimizations based on initial data, but it also gives the ad program more time to reach as many people in the audience as possible. Especially for many targeted campaigns with a smaller audience (such as a school board race with only 6,500 registered voters), our media buyers incorporate extended flight dates into plans to ensure we have enough time to reach your voters frequently enough that they recall your campaign.

Finally, CTRs and VCRs are a helpful snapshot into how voters are interacting with your ad - but aren't always the "end all" of digital metrics. For example, some campaigns optimize toward reach and impressions, aiming to get in front of voters as many times as possible, regardless of whether they are engaging with the ad via a click to the landing page. Others are focused on a "direct response" conversion, such as signing up to receive a lawn sign or donating to the campaign.

For a benchmark, the industry average click through rate is 0.08%, but we've worked with clients at SpeakEasy to reach CTRs up to 5x the industry average. The click through rate can also give campaign managers, consultants, and candidates the ability to understand a campaign's impact throughout a campaign, to complement polling, voter-conversations, and additional media channels.

about SpeakEasy

We support Democratic campaigns, causes and consultants with leading data, strategic targeting, and comprehensive ad tech to launch digital media and direct mail strategies. Please visit us at speakeasystudios.com to learn more.