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Behind the Scenes: Strategies for Creating Authentic TikTok Ads

The Art of Crafting Successful TikTok Ads: Insights from Top-Performing Creatives

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As an advertising channel, TikTok plays by its own rules. Its creative strategy relies on native video formats that have broken the traditional rules of marketing so commonly seen on other social platforms. Successful TikTok creatives often forgo polished visuals and narratives for brevity, authenticity, and creativity.

Using analytics from TikTok's Creative Center, we conducted a review of top-performing in-feed creatives to determine what makes TikTok ads tick. Here are our biggest takeaways:

Craft the Perfect Hook:

TikTok thrives on short attention spans. Take this representative viewer retention curve from a high-performing ad (high CTR and clicks):

Since users typically scroll past an ad in the space of seconds, it's crucial to quickly grab their attention. The better the "hook," the better the engagement rate.

Common approaches include eye-catching visuals and sounds, surprising voice-over dialogue, and high-contrast banner text. For instance, this meal delivery ad opens with a pile of cash alongside the banner, "I'm not worried about paying for my bills anymore."

This attention-grabbing hook asks, "Can I Eat all the Subway Series Subs in One Sitting?" More abstractly, these ads demonstrate two promising approaches to capturing the audience early; the first leads with the benefits of a product/service, while the second proposes a question and makes you wait for the answer.

Leveraging User-Generated Content

TikTok is dominated by user-generated content that's shot in a casual, organic style. By incorporating UGC, brands can leverage creators' established audiences, credibility, and authenticity.

With TikTok's unique "Spark Ads," brands can even repackage organic content as ads (with the creator's permission). This format can be especially effective as a form of "social proof"; it shows that your product earned organic buzz, and demonstrates your brand's responsiveness to its customers.

Here's an example of UGC in TikTok ads with a popular "Q&A" format.

Brevity Helps:

TikTok allows video ads of up to 60 seconds. But with rapid retention drop-offs, it's usually best to stick with shorter formats. In fact, high-performing ads can be as short as six or seven seconds, like this example.

Highlight Limited Offers

Many successful ads highlight limited-time offers or discounts to create a sense of urgency and encourage immediate action. This approach can be particularly effective when paired with user-generated content (UGC). In partnership with TikTok creators, brands can present discounts as exclusive insider info from a trusted source.

Demonstrate Your Product in Action

Successful TikTok ads commonly use skits or straightforward how-tos to show a product or service in action. Take this ridesharing ad, which uses a comedic twist to demonstrate its "book in advance" feature.

Show the Face Behind Your Brand

Ads featuring a company's founder or employees can help establish trust and convey the brand ethos. For example, this viral mouthwash ad uses a straightforward, informational approach that relies on the founder's perceived subject matter expertise. Many small- and mid-sized businesses have cultivated loyal TikTok followings through authentic, relatable content: responding to comments, sharing their brand's story, or connecting with audiences on a personal level.

Takeaways

The TikTok viral trend cycle is exceptionally short, and what works today may not drive performance in the long term. That's why our team of expert strategists continually monitors organic and performance best practices so our creative team can pivot when needed. Interested in learning more? Get in touch to learn why TikTok is one of our fastest-growing performance channels.

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