WWF uses Google's AdMob to capitalise on the mobile opportunity, achieving new conversions at low cost

Overview

WWF is the world's leading independent conservation organisation. It aims to address issues from the survival of species and habitats to climate change, sustainable business and environmental education. Measured by ad impressions, the charity has emerged over the past five years one of the biggest online display advertisers in Sweden.

Making a move

In the beginning of 2011, WWF's head of marketing Mariann Eriksson realised the mobile internet was on the brink of a boom and that the charity had to move quickly in order to take advantage. "We needed to be ahead of our competitors," she says. "A lot of people in Sweden already used smartphones and the usage would explode during the year. We needed to test this channel to be able to adopt our fundraising model to it." She also noticed the display advertising for desktop internet was becoming increasingly crowded, putting WWF in competition with other charities and commercial companies. Without wasting any time, Mariann instructed WWF's agency 2XL to run a test campaign over one month on a selection of mobile networks.

Early adopters

WWF's digital mission is to recruit monthly donors at the lowest cost per order. "Online, the model we have for fundraising is based on recency planning, a strategy where the focus is to have as high reach as possible at low daily or weekly frequency," 2XL's Stefan Fagerström explains. "We need to reach people when they are in the 'buying mode'. So we want to be present everywhere, every day. That is the strategy we've used online, so the question was can we do this on the mobile channel as well?"

WWF already has exceptionally high brand recognition in Sweden, so WWF's debut mobile campaign was not about brand building or storytelling. Instead, the activity was purely centred on direct response in the form of fundraising. The objectives were to test the charity's online approach in a new platform, to establish a performance baseline to inform future mobile campaigns and to achieve the most conversions at the lowest cost per click.

Simple banner ads encouraged users to adopt a polar bear or tiger; by clicking one of these ads a user would be taken to a landing page on the WWF mobile site where they could sign up to make a monthly donation towards the animal of their choice.

The campaign was implemented across a number of mobile networks, including AdMob. One of the largest of its kind in the world, AdMob gives advertisers the opportunity to reach and interact with customers on the mobile web by placing ads within its network of over 100,000 apps. Worldwide, AdMob generates over 2 billion impressions per day in 230 countries. In the Nordics, AdMob serves millions of daily ad requests and achieves over 20 million impressions per day. And in Sweden, it reaches millions of unique devices through thousands of premium in-app placements.

At a Glance

Goals

- Test WWF's web strategy in a new platform
- Establish key performance indicators for mobile
- Extend WWF's first mover advantage
- Recruit monthly donors at the most efficient cost possible

Solution

- Launched simple image and text banners on mobile
- Trialled AdMob against other mobile networks

Results

- AdMob outperformed all other networks with lowest cost-per-click and highest conversions
- WWF dropped other channels to focus on AdMob and increased mobile investment by 400%
- Mobile conversions increased to almost 25% of WWF's total conversions across all platforms

It all adds up

WWF tried different mobile channels, both local and international, but 2XL quickly noticed that AdMob stood out among the different networks with a low cost per order and an impressive number of orders. "The key learning was that the Swedish local pages were overpriced, not effective and not suited for fundraising," explains Stefan. "The experience we got from AdMob was super high reach, good pricing and good conversions."

Users clicking simple banner ads across the AdMob network would arrive on landing pages on the WWF mobile site.

A key factor of success was that through AdMob WWF could buy on a cost-per-click (CPC) basis and that the CPC was low. "The reach is massive," Stefan says, "and the price model AdMob is using is really good for us because it allows us to do exactly what we want to do which is to pay per click or per action." In fact the CPC on AdMob was the lowest of all the test channels they tried out by a factor of seven.

At the end of the month-long trial, WWF decided to drop advertising on the other channels since they had proved too expensive. They continued to advertise on AdMob however for the remaining four months of the year, increasing their mobile investment by 400%.

During this period 2XL's aim was not only to develop their media buying strategies further, but also to optimise ad creatives and landing pages. To achieve these ends, they worked in close partnership with the AdMob team at Google who provided intensive support and expertise. The agency continued to prioritise high reach with low daily frequency rather than niche marketing, and so the ads ran on targeted handpicked premium app placements including Wordfeud and Angry Birds. Stefan reports that optimising was fairly easy. "AdMob gives us many different possibilities to improve our advertising. This together with good tracking tools and changes on the landing pages were crucial for the result."

WWF continued to see good results during the months to follow, noticing that as investment increased, conversions increased too. Most conversions occurred at certain hours of the day so they drove investment toward those prime time slots. At the end of the four-month campaign, mobile conversions had risen to represent almost 25% of WWF's total conversions across all platforms.

WWF's next step was to triple their mobile investment as they put plans into place for the 2012. AdMob will continue to perform a key role in their approach. "We will use it on a regular basis for fundraising," explains Stefan, "but we will also use it in our communication campaigns like Earth Hour. We know that it is very cost effective to use AdMob for reach and also for gaining traffic to our webpages. Plus we know the cost for that reach and the traffic is great."