

Where Inbound and Outbound Marketing Meet - Journey Based Advertising

Getting your business to stand out in a sea of other businesses can be extremely challenging. That's why you adopted inbound marketing or pursued other digital strategies, but you've hit a wall.

Now you might be wondering, how am I supposed to break through all that noise and reach the people who would actually benefit from my product or service?



Wonder no more, there is a way:

Journey Based Advertising

If you're an inbound marketer like us, you probably have all kinds of misconceptions about paid advertising. Maybe you think it's always disruptive, it's not helpful, the ROI isn't there like it is for inbound, or you feel a little slimy using an outbound tactic like paid ads.

In this article we'll dispel those myths, explain exactly what this journey based advertising means, and how you can apply it to your digital marketing efforts.

What is Journey Based Advertising?

Journey based advertising is a paid advertising strategy that helps your buyer persona make a purchasing decision along the buyer's journey by answering questions and providing resources and offers that align with the awareness, consideration, and decision stages of the buyer's journey. Journey based advertising provides a better user experience for your buy persona than other paid advertising strategies and a greater return on investment for the advertiser.

Let's decipher this definition step by step.

Importance of Understanding Your Buyer Persona

Everything starts with people who buy from you. We call your typical buyer, your buyer persona.

Your buyer person includes demographic information:

- Age
- Sex
- Location
- Education level
- Etcetera

Demographic information helps the journey based advertiser target their audience especially on display networks. On search networks where you can also understand the intent of the searcher, you can loosen up your targeting and still generate qualified leads.

It's easy to breeze over this kind of information, but there are all kinds of content implications that matter for journey based advertising and your overall content and messaging. Your buyer persona age and location dictates what pop culture references you should pepper into your content and what slang are likely to use or not. Their education level let's you know how sophisticated your content should be.

As you dig deeper into how this impacts your marketing, you will be able to tease out what devices they are on, for what purpose, and when. This has a direct impact on when you show ads and your bid strategy. Maybe you should bid down on ads in apps at 3:30 in the afternoon because your buyer persona handed over the cell phone to the kids on the ride home from school? Or bid aggressively on mobile when you know your buyer persona is stuck in status meetings they don't really want to be in.

And also a psychographic profile:

- Interests
- Challenges
- Goals
- Fears
- Etcetera

Psychographic information is the perfect place to start split testing ads. Let's say you're an addiction treatment provider. You could run an ad focused on a life with gainful employment and free from the lies and destructive behavior that characterizes active addiction or their fear that their children could be taken away from them. One ad focuses on the prospect's goals and the other their fears.

If you haven't taken the time to develop your buyer personas, bookmark our post on [how to create a buyer persona for later reference](#).



But the buyer persona is just part of the story.

Besides knowing who your buyers are and what's important to them, you also need to understand the process that they go through from becoming aware of their problem to choosing you as their solution.

This is the **buyer's journey**.

The Buyer's Journey

The [buyer's journey](#) is the process each customer goes through leading up to a purchase. According to [Hubspot](#), there are three stages of the buyer's journey:

- Awareness
- Consideration
- Decision



The Journey Based Advertising strategy adapts to the stage your prospect is in. Journey Based Advertising is always helpful and educational, but we call it journey based not inbound for a reason. There are times that it can interrupt our buyer persona, but the journey based advertiser only does in alignment with the buyer's journey.

Let's say you're shopping for a car online and you finally found the perfect car for you. You're about to hit the "buy" button when someone knocks on your door. The person who answers the door is a sharply dressed car salesman and he tells you that before you buy that car he has the exact same model, with the exact same mileage, in the exact same condition right across the street for \$5,000 less and a better warranty. If everything checked out, you'd open up your door and invite him for an iced tea! You can't get much more outbound than door to door sales, but at the decision stage in the buyer's journey, your buyer persona can tolerate, welcome even, interruption.

Now let's envision a different scenario. You take your old clunker into the mechanic because it's making that weird noise again. Your spouse drives you back home and not an hour later you get a call from the mechanic. The repairs that need done are going to cost twice as much as you were expecting. Ugh. You

hang up the phone and the doorbell rings. Who is there? Our omniscient car salesman of course! He has your dream across the street for \$5,000 less than you could find it anywhere else. You just might shut the door in his face. You're getting a decision phase offer while they haven't quite hit the awareness phase. Worst of all, you're using a decision phase marketing tactic to deliver the offer.

Here are some examples of the types of paid ads that typically make the most sense at different stages in the buyer's journey.

Awareness Stage

- Search
- Native advertising
- Boosted posts
- Newsfeed ads
- Video display ads
- Sponsored posts

Consideration Stage

- Retargeting
- Display
- Social media display
- Overlay or skippable video ads

Decision Stage

- Retargeting
- Call only
- Email ads
- Social media ads
- Video ads

Journey based advertisers map the buyer's journey stage to certain paid advertising formats and tactics, and at the same time, like we do as inbound marketers, map offers to the buyer's journey stage. When you take the time to do this work, you'll provide the best user experience for your leads and optimize your return on paid ads at the same time!

One word of caution. You need to be able to nurture your leads. In the past, marketers have spent too much time and money chasing prospects in the decision stage. Don't get me wrong, journey based advertising including direct response ads to decision stage buyers, but journey based advertising also recognizes that there's a lot less competition to show compelling ads to your buyer persona at earlier stages in the buyer's journey. Journey Based Advertising also leverages lead nurturing content to move

your prospects through the buyer's journey with your content after they have become a lead to cost effectively close customers.

Lastly, journey based advertising looks at the big picture when it comes to attribution. Because of the focus on decision stage prospects, last click attribution is common, but click assisted conversions from paid advertising can have a meaningful impact on lead generation just the same at all stages of the buyer's journey.

Account Structure

The basic account setup for a journey based advertisers includes three campaigns for each advertising network that you using. If you're creating campaigns on the search and display networks, for example, you will need six total campaigns. The campaigns correspond to each stage in the buyer's journey: awareness, consideration, and decision. In each of these campaigns, create tightly focused ad groups about topics that you are buyer persona is interested in at that stage in the buyer's journey.

Alternatively, you can create campaigns based upon a topic, product, or service and then ad groups for each buyer's journey stage. You'll get a more holistic picture of how your products and services are performing on Google Ads this way, but the three campaign setup has advantage as well. With awareness, consideration, and decision campaigns you will be able to better distinguish between hot prospects and those that need more nurturing from a cost per lead prospective and for the hand off to sales.

Most important, since you set budgets at the campaign level in Google Ads, the determining factor for setting structuring your ad account centers on whether it's more important to focus on budget based upon buyer's journey stage, the solutions that you provide, or if you have the skills and resources to manage a more complex account that accounts for both.

Single Keyword Ad Groups, or SKAGs, are also a great tool for journey based advertisers as well. By targeting only the broad, phrase, and exact match type of a particularly valuable keyword in an ad group, you can tightly align the messaging between the keyword, ad, and landing page giving your buyer persona a good experience and increasing the effectiveness of your advertising just the same.

To maximize the reach of your remarketing efforts, I recommend creating a separate campaign for remarketing and then three ad groups based upon buyer's journey stage.

The Awareness Stage: When People Realize They Have a Problem

The awareness stage starts when your buyer persona realizes there is a problem. In the awareness stage, people not only identify the problem but they also investigate it further. They have questions and you have answers.

But, first ask yourself these questions so that you can better understand how to connect with your buyer persona in this stage.

- How does your buyer persona first learn they have a problem?
- What words are they going to use to describe the problem?
- How do buyers educate themselves when solving their challenges? What sources are they going to use online or offline?
- What are the consequences of not taking action as the buyer?
- Are there common misconceptions buyers have about reaching their goals or addressing challenges?

Your goal here is to not only to educate buyers to better understand their problem, but also make them aware that there are solutions to their problem and you have them to move them further along the buyer's journey.



The answers to these questions dictate:

- Where you should be running paid ads
- How you should word them (hint: go light on jargon)
- The pain points to include in the ad
- How to educate your buyer persona in this stage.

One of my buyer personas, for example, is Marketing Mary. She's the director of marketing for a senior care facility. She's over 40 years old, lives in the suburbs, college educated, and has been in the industry her whole life. She's personally a heavy user of social media and keeps her company social media channels up to date.

There are a few ways that she identifies that she has a problem. One is through keeping up with her competitors in her area or from information presented by industry specific websites. She sees that others are investing heavily in digital marketing, and she's barely got a website. She might also identify the problem during the budget season, when it's clear that a legacy marketing tactic is no longer work, or in the face of tepid census numbers in general.

The late summer and fall are great times to start the conversation with her. My first contact with Mary can be from an ad on social media or a display ad on an industry magazine's website. As for the ad itself, I might skip using "journey based advertising," but I can use marketing jargon with Mary. A content offer can still convert for her but offering a tool, worksheet, or a webinar will likely work better. Offers that explain why her organic social media marketing efforts aren't producing more facility tours are a good start.

At this point, you will have a list of keywords that both account for how your buyer persona speaking and also what they will be searching for in the awareness phase. Awareness stage keywords are broad, they are often questions, and are sometimes only loosely related to the keywords that they would be searching for in consideration and decision phases. Marketing Mary might be searching for something like "how to get more senior living tours" or "senior living marketing ideas."

Objectives and metrics are important for any paid advertising campaign. Here are some typical metrics to measure at the awareness stage though your's may vary:

- Number of ad impressions: brand awareness is a factor at this stage.
- Click through rate: this helps you understand whether your ad and offer are relevant and/or whether it's in the right place at the right time.

- Landing page conversion rate: leads!
- Cost per lead: these leads should cost less than leads at other buyer's journey stages.
- Email unsubscribe rate: leads at this stage, have a long way to go to becoming customers. Track whether they are unsubscribing or engaging with initial emails or other tactics you use to engage these top of the funnel leads.
- Cycle time: how long does it take a typical paid lead from the awareness stage to close? Use data from other channels as a benchmark but track this to better understand your cash flow and profitability of awareness ad campaign.
- Close rate: because awareness stage leads will engage with not just your journey based advertising campaign, but also email, phone, and/or other channels over time, a high or low close rate can be impacted by many factors.

Now let's tackle consideration stage journey based advertising strategy!

The Consideration Stage: When The Problem is Defined

The awareness stage doesn't often last long. With a great range of informative resources, people are able to quickly realize exactly what their problem is and then they're able to start looking for the solutions and brands that can provide those solutions.

In the **consideration stage**, buyers have clearly defined goals and challenges and have made commitments to addressing them. Your buyer persona will evaluate the different approaches or methods available to pursue their goals, assuage their fears, or solve their challenges.

One of the best advertising strategies to use at this stage is retargeting. Retargeting allows you to serve ads to people who have already been to your website or engaged with your social media properties. If you're a HubSpot user, you can add the pixels you need to track this information and create the audiences right inside of the platform. The benefit of retargeting is that people in this audience already know something about your company, so future clicks are relevant and usually less expensive per click than other paid strategies. The downside is that unless you have huge numbers to retarget, you should expect a small but highly profitable campaign.

To efficiently meet their needs in this stage of the buyer's journey, you and your team should think about the following questions:

- What categories of solutions do buyers investigate?
- How do buyers educate themselves on these various categories?
- How do buyers perceive the pros and cons of each category?
- How do buyers decide which category is right for them?

The answers to these questions are a great start to your keyword list in the consideration stage for search network ads. One challenging aspect of determining keywords at this stage is the use of branded terms. Depending upon where the buyer is in their journey they could be either a consideration phase or a decision phase term. A good start is to use broad brand and product names in the consideration phase or terms that include comparison related terms, ie. versus, for consideration phase offers and keep long-tail terms in the decision phase and terms with commercial modifiers, ie. buy.

How can advertising help with consideration stage?

Just like in awareness stage, it's beneficial if your advertising efforts integrate with other inbound marketing efforts in consideration stage. The same or similar offers and messaging.

Some of the best types of campaigns at this stage are:

- Search campaigns on Google ads linked to your landing page where visitors can download a piece of content, tool, or other resource.
- Lead Ads campaigns in Facebook leading potential buyers to the contact forms all within Facebook's ecosystem.
- Retargeting campaigns on both Google and Facebook that target potential buyers who have had experience with your brand previously.



The Decision Stage: When The Final Cut Is Made

Depending on the type of the product and number of stakeholders, the decision stage could be short and simple like picking your favorite flavor of ice-cream (mint chocolate chip) or it can be more complex.

In enterprise companies when the executives are considering new investments, or when you are buying a new house, the decision stage could last for months where you are analyzing the pros and cons before the decision to purchase.

During this stage, feel free to talk about the particulars of your product or service, your prospects are looking at what you have to offer specifically.

At this stage you want to show why your product is the right choice and how it will help your buyer personas achieve their goals.

To help you structure decision stage offers better here are the questions to ask your team and yourself:

- What criteria do buyers use to evaluate the available offerings?
- When buyers investigate your company's offering, what do they like about it compared to alternatives?
- What concerns do they have with your offering?
- Who needs to be involved in the decision?
- For each person involved, how does their perspective on the decision differ?
- Do buyers have expectations around trying the offering before they purchase it?
- Outside of purchasing, do buyers need to make additional preparations, such as implementation plans or training strategies?

After giving these questions a serious thought and coming up with answers, it's time to put them into action and make some smart marketing moves.

No cutting corners here. You have to finish strong and wow potential buyers with outstanding content.

Here are some common offers that the journey based advertiser uses at this stage. Note you have seen and use similar offers now (but maybe to the wrong audience):

- Free trials or demos
- Coupons or discounts
- Consultations
- Audits

Instead of asking people to exchange their email for access to the newsletter, ask for a bigger commitment. Ask for phone numbers, financial commitments, etc. When people are at this stage, they are more willing to share data with you if you ask.

You also have the most latitude with ad formats at this stage. Some of the more disruptive ad formats that you should avoid in earlier stages may be appropriate now. For example, you might run a display ad on YouTube in the awareness phase, a skippable video ad in the consideration stage, and a non-skippable bumper ad in the decision stage.

Conclusion

Journey based advertising seeks to help and educate your buyer persona just like inbound. Choose ad formats and offers based upon your understanding of your buyer persona at different stages in the

When implemented properly it could certainly bring better ROI for the money invested in advertising. After all, you pay for each click using advertising platforms, so they better count and bring value to your business.

If your marketing team is not familiar with this concept, or you simply have no time to execute it according to best practices, No Bounds Digital team can help.

Our expertise and experience will help you to tie your marketing efforts with the buyer's journey of your potential buyers and enable them to become your customers.



Schedule a quick call with us

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No Bounds is a small, but mighty, digital marketing agency. We're looking forward to hearing from you.



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