Takeaways from our Live Session on Evaluating Criteo and CitrusAd for Target Product Ads

By Claire McBride // December 14, 2023 // Research, Webinars

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Stratably hosted Elizabeth Marsten from Tinuiti for a review of the mediation layer and the choice between Criteo and CitrusAd when it comes to Target Product Ads (TPAs).

Key Topics:

1. An overview of the mediation layer with Criteo and CitrusAd for TPAs
2. Three different approaches to evaluate your options with TPAs:
   - Run both Criteo & CitrusAd at the same time
   - Compare to Other Retailers
   - Timed Same SKU Test
3. Key considerations for deciding between Criteo and CitrusAd
4. An introduction to Roundel Media Studio, coming February 2024

Watch the recording here

Action Items:

1. **Consider running a timed same SKU test** on Criteo for 30 days and CitrusAd for 30 days to understand differences in clicks, conversion rates, and CPCs to ultimately understand how performance of the two stacks up for your brand and products.

2. **Consider testing campaigns on the same SKUs with 4 different retailers via Criteo and/or CitrusAd** to get a sense of TPA performance relative to other retailers. This can lead to a more granular understanding of the opportunity and/or challenges with your spend on Target, paired with concrete data to share back with your merchant.

3. When evaluating Criteo and CitrusAd, beyond pure performance also **take into account other considerations** such as vendor income commitments, resources available to manage the platform(s), and other RMNs you're spending on with either platform.

4. Note, while there aren't hard switching costs to move to/from Criteo and CitrusAd, it does require time and people resources to set up, test, and manage. Therefore, **these evaluation frameworks are here for brands that feel they are getting stuck or not happy with their current TPA performance**. Otherwise, if it's not broke, don't fix it!

5. **Stay in the know on Roundel Media Studio (RMS)** by [joining the mailing list](link). Ensure you have access to Partners Online Portal and make sure any campaign management tools you use are integrated (or have it on their roadmap).

Here's what we found most interesting:

1. **Criteo's 20% DSP fee** should not be viewed as an immediate nonstarter as it could beat out CitrusAd on conversion rates and/or CPCs enough to offset the added 20%. However, the other key difference is that the 20% fee being paid does not get counted towards vendor income the same way that 100% of CitrusAd spend does.

2. Experience with **Criteo's automatic keyword bidding** has been positive and, all else equal, requires less resources to manage compared to CitrusAd that doesn't have automatic capabilities. However, if you're in a competitive category and want more control over your keywords, then CitrusAd could be a better option.

3. If you're seeing irrelevant products show up on competitive keywords due to Criteo's automatic bidding, submit that as a case to Criteo to potentially adjust.

4. **While you can technically run Criteo and CitrusAd at the same time**, this is not typically advised as managing both platforms is effectively double the work and you risk driving up CPCs and competing against yourself. If you're going to do this, split the SKU list so you're not bidding against yourself.

5. **Consider the competitive landscape on Target.com** as you make investment decisions. Given a more curated assortment compared to large marketplaces like Amazon and Walmart, there may be less of a need to spend on Target Product Ads specifically, and that money could be better spent on other marketing levers with Target or on another retail media network.

6. **Roundel Media Studio (RMS)** is a self-service platform for activation that brands will be able to choose to use (in addition to current choices of Criteo and CitrusAd). This is expected to become available in February 2024 with more details to come.