

10 Proven Bidding Strategies Small Businesses Can Use to Beat Big Brands A Practical Checklist for Programmatic & Social Media Advertising



1. Use Goal-Based & Value-Driven Bidding

- Use Target CPA or Target ROAS in programmatic campaigns.
- Leverage Value Optimization on Meta/TikTok.
- Apply Cost Cap to stabilize CPA.
- Use bid shading to avoid overpaying.



2. Build Precise, High-Intent Audiences

- Create micro-segments: location, behavior, intent.
- Use first-party data + contextual signals.
- Build lookalikes from high-value customers.
- Maintain dedicated retargeting tiers.



3. Implement Dayparting & Smart Budget Pacing

- Boost bids during low-competition hours.
- Reduce bids during peak corporate spending.
- Allocate spend to top conversion periods.
- Refresh dayparting weekly based on performance.



4. Train Algorithms the Right Way

- Keep budgets stable (+/- 20%).
- Start broad and optimize once learning stabilizes.
- Use server-side tracking (CAPI).

- Track micro + macro conversions.



5. Use Bid Multipliers Strategically

- Increase bids for returning visitors.
- Boost bids for high-value contextual pages.
- Lower bids for expensive/low-value inventory.
- Use audience-specific multipliers in DSPs.



6. Optimize for Incrementality, Not Just Attribution

- Run lift tests (geo-split or audience split).
- Identify channels that cause conversions.
- Increase spend on high-lift audiences.
- Reduce reliance on last-click channels.



7. Let Creative Do the Heavy Lifting

- Launch 5–10 creative variations.
- Customize creatives per placement.
- Optimize based on thumb-stop rate, CTR, hold rate.
- Refresh creative every 2–3 weeks.



8. Build Whitelists & Blacklists

- Identify top-performing domains.
- Exclude underperforming inventory.
- Bid aggressively on top 10–20% performers.
- Refresh lists monthly.



9. Pair Retargeting With Predictive Prospecting

- Use retargeting to feed lookalikes.
- Integrate CRM/offline conversion data.
- Build predictive audiences when available.
- Cap retargeting frequency.



10. Use Geofencing & Local Bid Boosting

- Boost bids in key ZIP/radius zones.
- Geofence competitor locations.
- Prioritize high-value neighborhoods.
- Create separate campaigns for strong geos.