

**Karly:** YouTube's used often for research. It is a platform that users trust more than other social media platforms. For sure.

This is Ad Lab: Performance marketing dissected, decoded, and delivered.

**Gavin:** We are back in the Ad Lab. I'm your host, Gavin Flynn. We've got another great episode lined up for you this week. For today's deep dive, I'm going to be joined by LP's own Karly Scott, Manager of Client Services and one of our in-house YouTube experts. I am really excited for the conversation. We are covering some of the more strategic and technical aspects of the YouTube platform, along with some Lord of the Rings talk. So stay tuned for that. But first, we're actually going to get things kicked off with this week's hot headlines, and I'm going to be joined by Jack Meyer, Senior Account Manager here at LP. It's his first time on the podcast. Welcome in, Jack.

**Jack:** Hey, excited to be here, Gavin. Appreciate it.

**Gavin:** So you brought in a headline this week that I'm excited to dive into because it touches on a few topics that are top of mind with a lot of marketers these days. We're talking AI safety features in the Google Ads platform for policy disapproval. But this is a larger trend that Google is rolling out at a large scale. And I know that you were down in Mountain View for the Google Summit. Tell me a little bit about the event. I was curious how that went.

**Jack:** Focus was really on AI, which I think is top of mind for a lot of folks. Right? And a couple big highlights, the concerns from our clients aspect where, "Hey, where is my data being protected? Is my IP being protected in a lot of what's going on with AI?" If I share information on my product, my whatever, where does that IP end there? And then if Gemini, for example, was talking with one of their competitors, how does that get involved in some of those conversations?

**Gavin:** So kind of security focused.

**Jack:** Focused kind of security focus. Exactly. Yeah. And Google does a pretty good job of they have these ten core principles of how Gemini operates. And that really I do think secure your IP because they have to think about it from a legal perspective, if anything. Right? I think at least from the Gemini perspective, they are on top of their game. They're taking this very seriously.

**Gavin:** The reason I wanted to connect it to the event was the tool that Google, or the feature that Google is going to be rolling out here, it looks like pretty soon, is Automated Policy Fix, which I know is such a challenge for brands that might ride the line from a content perspective, from an industry perspective, that still want to advertise on Google, but are running into roadblocks where ad groups are getting disapproved and campaigns are getting paused. I was curious if you had any major takeaways from the article that kind of perked your eyes up in terms of like, "Oh, this will be useful for clients." Anything interest you in here?

**Jack:** Absolutely. I work with a variety of clients and some of them run into this exact issue—think health care verticals and stuff like that, where there's just HIPAA laws in place to protect

people's privacy for this kind of stuff. So they and we run into disapprovals all the time. And it's frustrating for clients. I think that they would love every problem to be solved by a click of a button. Right? That's what we all want. Right? And unfortunately, sometimes it is not that simple. Normally how we have to do it is all right, we fix that problem, whatever it is, but we typically have to submit a review and then it's on Google's timeline for when that gets figured out. It just can take a while. And it's like, "Hey, this is time is money for a lot of folks." And what this AI assistant is going to do is to hopefully make it so that it can automatically scan specifically your account and immediately take down that suspension or whatever and take care of it.

**Gavin:** And it looks like it's a panel that opens up on the right-hand side of the Google platform. And it's basically some sort of processing system where you're able to surface the request, get it processed faster, and have a little bit of back and forth, which again, was previously, I think, kind of held at arm's length, where users weren't getting that quick feedback on what is the policy disapproval. And I don't know if you've—I'm sure you have—but I would click into some of those policy disapprovals and it'll open up a massive page of potential things that could have gone wrong. And it won't necessarily always give you a clear answer. This seems like you'll be able to identify the issue, process it, and then the piece that you mentioned that actually I hadn't thought of was actually relaunching the campaign. Did Google mention at the event if there was any other features and tools that they had their eye on?

**Jack:** The biggest takeaway that I had was just how they use AI, and how different that is than maybe how we might use AI, right? So what I found really helpful was within Gemini you can set up these things called Gems. And it's basically like I'm training this Gem. You're a like if you're a parent, right? And you have kids that you're looking after and say, "Okay, this Gem, you're going to be an expert parent advisor or whatever, or preschool teacher maybe, or something like that." And then another one, maybe like a meal planner or something like that. And so then it kind of simplifies it to the point where it's like, "Okay, when I'm doing my meal plan stuff, I can go into this saved Gem." It's like you just log in through your own Google Drive. It's saved there. So when you go back to it, I don't know, a week or two or whatever, you don't have to re-initiate the same old prompts. You can just go in and this one has already been trained to what you like to do or what rules you've established.

**Gavin:** I was going to say it's kind of the job of the account manager and marketing consultant to keep brands up to speed on these new features and updates. We'll have to see exactly when the launch date is. I know that the article was only like a day or two, so this is like hot press right now. And I think that it's going to be rolling out in the next few weeks. I'm excited to see if this has an impact on brands. This will be fun to see where it goes.

**Jack:** Absolutely.

**Gavin:** Yeah. Jack, thank you for joining.

**Jack:** Yeah. No problem. Thanks for having me.

**Gavin:** All right. Let's keep the momentum going and jump into today's deep dive with Karly Scott. Karly and I have been working together for years now, and she's currently leading the charge on YouTube strategy here at LP. She's been marketing for over a decade, working across brands like Cushion Lab and Travel Oregon. She's actually a published author on Search Engine Land. She has another article coming on the way. And today's episode we're going to be covering why creative is the biggest driver of YouTube success, what brands need in place before they start spending on the platform, and why YouTube attribution is different from traditional PPC. Let's find out. Let's head into the lab. Karly, thanks for joining us on the pod.

**Karly:** Thank you for having me. I'm excited to be here.

**Gavin:** So I'm going to get things kicked off with a little resume for you because I want to tell the people who you are and what you do. Feel free to chime in. Feel free to chime in. I know Manager of Client Services covers a lot of different aspects to the business, but you've been at LP now for what, eight years? What is your role currently entailing? Because you're kind of an all star internally here at LP.

**Karly:** Oh thank you. Yeah. My role is I kind of like to call myself a Swiss Army knife because it changes every day. Some days I'm working on training and continuing education. Some days I'm working on social, some days I'm working on Microsoft and Google. It really changes every day.

**Gavin:** So you're flowing around a little bit.

**Karly:** I flow around a lot.

**Gavin:** Which is why I brought you on today, because we're going to be focusing in on the topic of YouTube. But before we get into that, I have probably my most important question of the pod that I'm going to ask you. I know that you're a big Lord of the Rings fan.

**Karly:** Sure I am.

**Gavin:** My question is, if you were going to choose a member of the Fellowship of the Ring to manage digital marketing for a brand, who would it be?

**Karly:** I'm going to go with Samwise Gamgee because Sam is my pick. Yes, my pick. Yes he is. He is honest. He cares about you as an individual. He's not selfish. He's purely in it just to help other people. And I think Sam would be amazing.

**Gavin:** Identifying pain points.

**Karly:** Very good.

**Gavin:** Listen, if Frodo needs help getting carried up a mountain...

**Karly:** Let me tell you, Frodo needs help a lot.

**Gavin:** He's going to be stepping up.

**Karly:** Yes.

**Gavin:** See, my pick for worst was going to be Boromir. For any Lord of the Rings fans out there, Boromir has a kind of a rough turn at the end of the Fellowship, at least in the movies. And I figured maybe Boromir might be maybe switching out accounts, maybe not super focused at the task at hand, and a little bit too focused on his own personal journey.

**Karly:** He'd get distracted by the new shiny thing for sure.

**Gavin:** The new shiny thing. The ring specifically. Yeah. I see what you did there. Yeah, you did that. Okay. There's no smooth way to transition into the topic at hand. So we're just going to dive into it. YouTube. You're known internally at LP as being a director and leader of strategy within the YouTube platform. First, how do you think you ended up there? Were you working on a few accounts that were heavy YouTube spenders, and that kind of got you in the space, more familiar with those campaign types?

**Karly:** Yes. So I started working on two specific brands that got me really deep into the YouTube land. One was a clothing brand. They sold women's clothing and prom dresses and whatnot. So to scale their brand, we relied on YouTube a lot. And then Cushion Lab, who I still currently work with, they're like my only client that I still have on my book because I have a lot of other responsibilities. But we scaled that brand pretty significantly. So it didn't happen overnight. You start really small and you just kind of iterate as you go. It's an interesting adventure because there's not really a blueprint.

**Gavin:** Yeah. Okay. Follow up question. And you can take either of those two examples for brands or just in general, how reliant is the success of the YouTube campaign set on the creative?

**Karly:** Oh, so important. It's just like Meta. I mean, Meta is like creative fatigue and getting lots of creative variations in the mix. It's the same exact situation and making sure that the creative you have is speaking to the audience you're targeting is essential.

**Gavin:** Okay, so there's a whole first layer that even comes in before you start with the advertising platforms where it's locking in: who are we speaking to? I imagine that you've probably seen some less than desirable creative in your time. Can campaigns still work if the creative is so-so or is it truly like, "Hey, make sure your creative strategy is locked in before even investing in paid ads on YouTube?"

**Karly:** I would say bad creative can work. But you're only going to get so far with it. The reason I say bad creative can work is because you can do a lot on YouTube with like UGC content, stuff shot on your phone. You don't have to have this magical, professionally produced piece of content to be on YouTube. So caveat with that, if that makes sense.

**Gavin:** Yeah. Speaking of foundational tasks for brands to carry out before they lock into YouTube. So outside of the creative side, let's say somebody is pretty confident with their target

market, their messaging, the story that they're trying to tell. What else should a brand set up prior to starting to invest in paid ads on YouTube or any other sort of housekeeping items, tracking items that people should set up before investing?

**Karly:** Yes, absolutely. Tracking 100%. First and foremost, that's just basics for any advertising you're doing. But nowadays—and we hit on this so often at our agency—if you're not feeding the algorithm the proper signals, you're only going to get so far. And with YouTube, being that you're relying on views, engagement and a lot less last-click conversions, it's even more important. So that is absolutely essential. I would say taking the time to invest in building your YouTube channel before you just launch in. You can absolutely have a pretty barebones channel. But I would say try and build that channel, try and have a system in place for continued creative iterations as you go. So you can add more to that. And as people engage with your channel, there's more content in there. But you can start small. You don't have to tackle everything overnight. YouTube is used often for research, so if your ad is getting in front of them in a video and then they're going to say, "Oh, well, I might go look up that brand," and if you don't have a well built-out YouTube channel and their research kind of ends there, that could be a negative experience. But again, they might also go to Google and find you there. But it is very heavily utilized, YouTube, as product research, brand discovery. It's a platform that users trust more than other social media platforms, for sure.

**Gavin:** So it functions top of funnel, that research phase before people get into branded searches. Whatever it might be. Okay, taking it further, let's say we've already covered this idea around kind of like a small merchant who's looking to start up that presence. What is the advanced next step for somebody who's looking to take themselves from, let's say, to use the analogy, 40 miles an hour to 50 miles an hour? Somebody who's moving but maybe wants to take that next step. Creative variations improve, testing multiple YouTube campaigns within an account. What are those expansion steps for a brand?

**Karly:** This is kind of the opposite of what you probably expect is, I would say get more granular with your campaign. So let's just say let's take Cushion Lab for example. Their bread and butter is the seat and lumbar support pillow. For a while, back support, exactly. Straight up I'm leaning down to you. I'm getting a little weird. But that was their bread and butter. So we kind of put all of our eggs in one basket. And then as they started to expand into sleep categories and travel, we created more campaigns that had that specific content targeting a travel audience with travel-oriented content. So it's about really honing it in from an audience perspective. And then also at a device level with Demand Gen campaigns, you can even say, "I'm just going to go after Shorts" and put in just Short content and really just hone in and go hard on your Shorts.

**Gavin:** Yeah. Well, and it's interesting how that idea of further segmentation and granularity corresponds with the way Google is pushing their platform to more signal-based in asset collections that are then signaled to be sent out to certain users. So you're still a proponent of, "Hey, we're looking to expand budget. Let's test with more manual structure." Have you been using the PMax capabilities in context of YouTube much? And have you seen account video assets in a PMax campaign?

**Karly:** Yes. And also PMax can auto-generate YouTube campaigns for you. I've seen them, and they're not the greatest. Let's just be honest.

**Gavin:** This is a really nitty-gritty question for you. Talk to me about bid strategies within YouTube.

**Karly:** So I'm going to track back a little bit because there's two different types of campaigns that you can go after. There's like Video Reach campaigns that are traditional YouTube. So those are going to be more like getting in front of as many people as possible. But a lot of YouTube is now transitioned to Demand Gen campaigns. So I love Demand Gen campaigns because you have a lot of control over the inventory perspective. That's where I lean on the most, just because not every single brand has a lot of capacity to invest in a Reach campaign. That's a lot more money. And also you're kind of casting a wider net. So I prefer Demand Gen campaigns, selecting just only going after video only and using Max Conversions or Max Conversion Value if you want. I'm a big proponent of Max Conversions and I don't put any targets on. I have done targets. But honestly, usually when I'm talking to my clients and if you're going to invest heavily in YouTube, you need to have a much lower ROAS target in mind for those campaigns and a set-aside budget. So I definitely keep it open. Don't limit yourself with targets.

**Gavin:** Follow up on that: conversion tracking with YouTube. I know that it's a different platform in that you aren't looking for that last-click attribution. What do you use for reporting to show the value of the work that YouTube's putting in in the marketing funnel?

**Karly:** Well, first and foremost, you should definitely be on data-driven attribution. So that way you're not cutting your top-funnel efforts off from a credit perspective. So that's the first place. Second, you can't get a lot of conversions on YouTube. It truly does depend on the industry. I've seen some people get like a 4x on YouTube for checkouts and purchases. But there's others who it's more like if it's a lead gen or service industry, you're going to be looking more at engagement. You're going to be looking at cross-referencing how your brand and your website and your overall leads are doing. So there's also some other metrics that Google is trying to make it easier to report on YouTube. So they've recently come out with these terms called Platform Comparables. And it includes both conversions and view-through conversions as well. So it does kind of merge the two worlds together a bit. So that's what I like to report on as well as really cross-referencing: "Okay, I'm investing in YouTube. How is that impacting the rest of your account and the rest of your brand?" It's not an exact science and you need to tie all those together or it's not going to paint your full picture.

**Gavin:** Yeah. And also different types of clients, because if you're working with an e-commerce brand that's going to be different from like a local store. I know on the local marketing franchise side of the equation, we'll occasionally run YouTube campaigns pre-store launch or pre-ribbon cut. And you can do very constrained local tests to see how that impacts branded traffic and direct traffic and referral traffic where it's a good way to kind of test how local market impact. Because you can set the parameters pretty tight.

**Karly:** Exactly. And that's a great way if you're ever scared to go into YouTube. You can just say, "Okay, well toss in some spend in California. See what happens." How does your California market grow with investing in YouTube? That's a great test and it's very controlled.

**Gavin:** Yeah. As long as you have somebody who's well versed in analytics in GA4, maybe a third-party reporting tool would be helpful in those.

**Karly:** Oh, I have to say, GA4 is probably not your friend when it comes to YouTube. I just—

**Gavin:** What would you recommend?

**Karly:** In the platform and or some of those tools like we've got a lot of those partners out there. Triple Whale, Prescient, North Beam, truly, I mean, Hyros would be another one. Yeah. It's going to come down to looking at—you really do need a look in-platform for YouTube for Google Ads, and then at platforms for site traffic and whatnot.

**Gavin:** What do you think the future for YouTube is looking like? It's a growing platform. I don't see it slowing down anytime soon. What in your eyes is going to be the next step for the advertising platform side of YouTube?

**Karly:** I think YouTube is expanding their inventory. I do know that they are also—YouTube is becoming very prominent in TV land. My parents are on YouTube TV. Like, that's what they use. But the amount of people and how YouTube has expanded over time and the video consumption is huge, so I don't think YouTube's going anywhere. YouTube is also one of the most profitable platforms from a video perspective. It's used for, like I was mentioning earlier, research, and with the addition of Shorts now, it is like a doom-scrolling platform that is now—it's no longer just on your TV or on your desktop. The amount of time that people spend on YouTube is crazy. Like, you're guilty. I'm on YouTube every single day. There are billions of hours being consumed on a daily basis, so that captive audience is just sitting there, and their time on YouTube is much longer for an average session duration compared to Meta, for example, or Instagram, because you're watching longer-form content. So there's a lot more opportunity to get in front of those people because they're a lot more glued to the screen for longer periods of time. So I truly think it's growing. I think there's going to be more and more advertisers on there. But it's not going anywhere. We love video.

**Gavin:** This might be a silly question. Do you think they'll ever break it out into its own advertising platform? Will the audience ever get big enough to where you have your Google accounts and then you have your YouTube account, the same way you have a TikTok advertising platform that's separate? Do you think that they'll ever actually have it in its own box?

**Karly:** I hope they do. Do you know how many times clients will look at YouTube and expect the same things as PPC because it's grouped in the same platform and it functions so royally differently? So I think Google is absolutely disserving itself by having YouTube grouped in with Google Ads, because people think about it as if it is PPC.

**Gavin:** Different attributions, different metrics.

**Karly:** Yeah. There's more metrics coming out. So I'm hopeful maybe it will happen. I can't say for sure, but I've been wishing for that ever since I started working with YouTube. I'm like, "Why is it on Google Ads?"

**Gavin:** Is this going to be our time to get a petition going? I was going to say, if you're watching in the comments, let us know. If you want YouTube in its own advertising platform, comment down below. Me and Karly are going to start a petition going. We'll keep the audience updated on that.

**Karly:** I'm so in.

**Gavin:** Karly, thanks for joining.

**Karly:** Thanks for having me. I had such a blast.

**Gavin:** That was awesome. Thank you to Karly for coming in to Ad Lab. Really enjoyed that conversation and thank you for tuning in this week. Don't forget to subscribe on Apple and Spotify, and we're also on YouTube. If you want a video format, just visit the Logical Position channel and look for the Ad Lab playlist and follow us on Instagram at AdLibPod for clips and announcements. I'll see you next week in the lab.