

round8 rough guide to Ad Ops

The UK online advertising industry is valued at £1,682.5m for the first half of 2008, taking a 18.7% share of the UK advertising industry (IAB/PwC, October 2008). This makes digital advertising perhaps the most exciting and fastest growing discipline within media; it continually proves to be a massive growth area with new and innovative ideas coming up everyday. Ad Operations is vital in the success of this growth and a career in it could give you the chance to get into the heart of digital advertising.

The Ad Operations/Traffic team supports the ad sales team and is responsible for management of all online advertising campaigns once sold. They ensure all revenue generated is delivered as promised, on time and accurately reported from requirement gathering and campaign implementation through to post campaign reporting.

The Ad Operations teams have a direct influence on revenue so are often targeted in line with the sales team and will earn bonus if revenue targets are hit. This is a key function within any online advertising department and requires attention to detail, the ability to multitask and a high level of accuracy in addition to good client facing skills.

You will need to liaise with a number of different departments both internally and externally including, finance, marketing, editorial and technical teams, which means good communication skills are a must. You will also respond to ad hoc queries and troubleshoot problematic campaigns for colleagues and clients. Analysis is a large part of this role and regular delivery reports are required in areas such as available inventory, site performance, under deliveries, and yield analysis. Accuracy is highly important as even a small mistake can prove very costly for the client.

You will use Ad-serving technologies on a day to day basis. These are systems that place ads on websites and have various functionalities including; trafficking ads according to different business rules, targeting ads to different users, tuning & optimising based on results and reporting impressions, clicks and post click activities. Most commonly used ad-servers are Atlas, Doubleclick (DART, DFP, DFA), Adtech, Eyeblander, & Tangozebra. You will also use html to create and amend ads when required. Depending on the level of technical input required you may also use systems like Dreamweaver, Photoshop and Flash.

What is the environment really like?

Although you won't be selling, you will be working very closely with the sales teams so will be exposed to the same fast paced and pressurised environment. You will need to be a strong character to deal with sales people who have a target in site and ensure they are following processes and procedures. You will also be working to tight deadlines and will most likely have a number of campaigns running at once so being able to manage your time effectively is essential.

What are the career prospects?

Online media is growing rapidly so there are some great career prospects in Ad Operations. There are different routes you can go down some of which include; heading up your own Ad Operations team, a more client focussed approach where you become a Technical Account Manager/Client Services Manager or a more technical approach where you look at the products and processes used in online media and make improvements to these.

What sort of training will I get?

You will have formal training in how to use the relevant ad-serving system in addition to basic html training but apart from this most learning is done on the job. The 3rd party ad-server providers are at hand to deal with any questions or queries as are experienced colleagues or managers but a proactive approach to learning is required.

How much will I earn?

Ad Operations is a skilled and highly valued profession so the financial gains reflect this. You can expect to earn between £18,000 and £20,000 in your 1st role, reaching up to £25,000 after 6 – 12 months. A Traffic Manager or Head of Ad Operations will expect a salary of £30,000 upwards. In addition to this you will often have the opportunity to earn bonus by meeting delivery targets.

What skills do I need to get the job?

To start with you will need to have a genuine interest and passion for online advertising. Someone who keeps up to date with new and innovative ad formats and industry trends will always be attractive to our clients.

The most valued skill for an Ad Operations professional is their ad-serving knowledge and experience. Any exposure or understanding of these systems will get you noticed. Use of applications such as excel, html, javascript, dreamweaver, flash and photoshop are also beneficial.

In order to succeed you will need to have strong learning and motivational abilities with the ability to multitask and adapt to change. Excellent people and process management skills are also required as you will often be required to manage multiple campaigns each at different stages in addition to troubleshoot problems.

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