

The AdSense Guide to Native Ads

Are Native Ads Right
for Your Site?



Google AdSense

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Users have high expectations for your site's UX, and you're likely already putting a lot of effort into shaping your site for them. In the same way, you should be putting a lot of care into shaping their interaction with the ads on your site. With 54% of global marketing leaders already using native advertising, and 18% planning to start using it, could native ads be the solution to help you provide a beautiful ads experience?¹



of global marketing leaders are already using native advertising



of global marketing leaders are planning to start using native advertising

According to Interactive Advertising Bureau (IAB), native ads are paid ads that have the goal of being “so cohesive with the page content, assimilated into the design, and consistent with the platform behavior that the viewer simply feels that they belong.”² Popular native ad formats include custom sponsored content, **content recommendations**, and **in-feed ad units**.

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- 1 “Current vs. Planned Use of Select Digital Ad Formats Among Marketing Leaders Worldwide, Jan 2016”, eMarketer, 2016.
 - 2 <http://www.iab.com/wp-content/uploads/2015/06/IAB-Native-Advertising-Playbook2.pdf>, IAB

In addition to providing publishers an opportunity to enhance the user experience, native advertising presents a huge revenue opportunity.

Spending on native ads is expected to grow to \$21 billion in 2018.³

In the next few chapters, you'll get to explore principles and tips that will help you decide if native ads are right for your site.

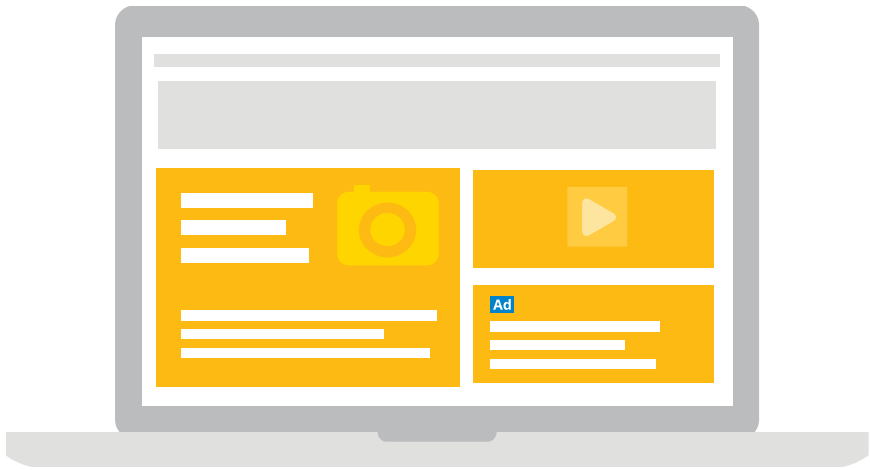
³ "Spending on native advertising is soaring as marketers and digital media publishers realize the benefits", Business Insider 2015

1. Prioritize your audience



Before incorporating native ads, consider your users' expectations of your site and how they'll respond to the type of ads you're choosing to use. Native ads allow you to show ads that meet their expectations by seamlessly fitting with your site's user experience.

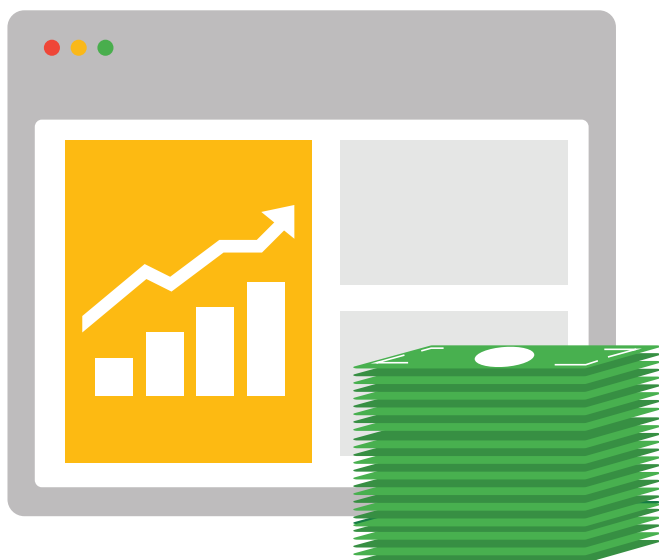
Once you have implemented native ad units, test it by using ad engagement rates as a metric that indicates your users' satisfaction with the way your ads integrate with your overall site's experience. We've seen our publishers experience a lot of success with this. [Trovit](#), a directory of for classified ads, grew their net revenue growth by over 100% [after implementing native ads](#).



Do keep in mind that **75% of advertisers believe that ethics must play a major role in offering native ads**—maintaining a high level of trust with your users is very important.⁴ Start by ensuring your native ads are clearly differentiated with labels from other content on your site. Reference **laws and advertising standards** to make sure you're not misrepresenting ads in any way. Also, take the time to test your strategy and gauge your audience response, ensuring that you're implementing native ads in a way that maintains their trust.

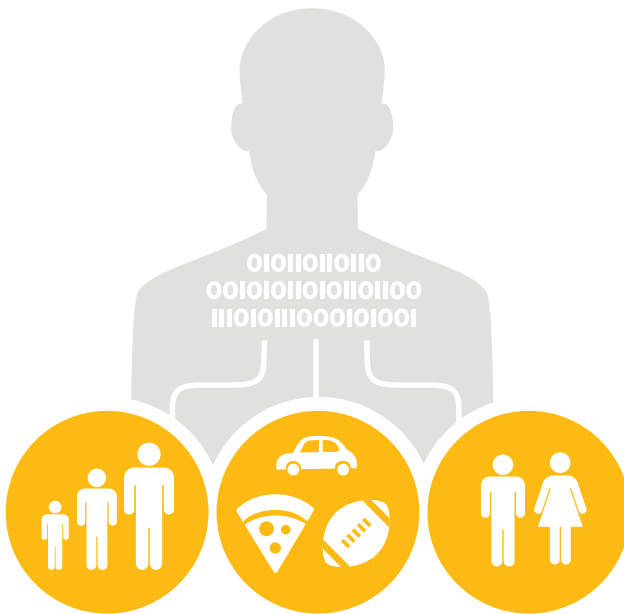
4 [“Association of National Analytics 2015 Survey Reports”](#), ANA, 2015.

2. Search for opportunities throughout your site where native ads can unlock new ad revenue



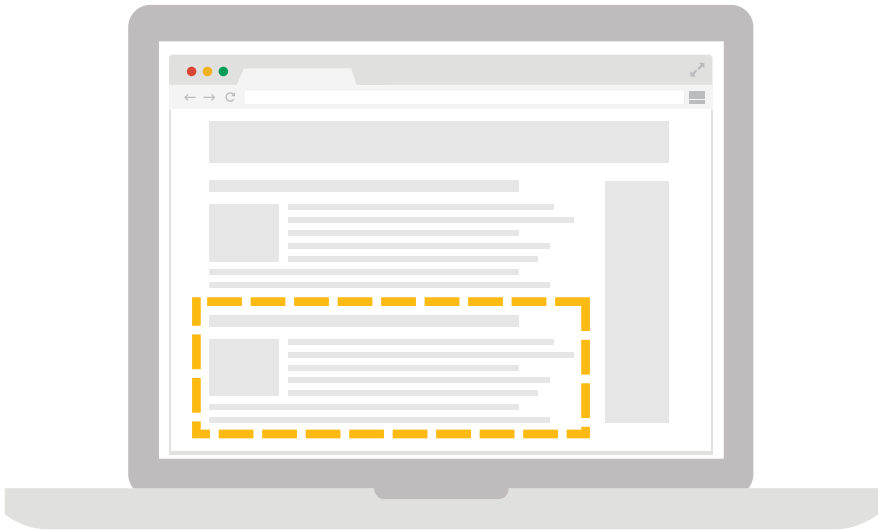
Native ads can open up new earning opportunities on your site where traditional ad formats weren't appropriate before. Ad formats, like banner ads, are effective but are sometimes limited by size and placements. A benefit of native ads is that they can be customized to fit seamlessly within your content – both in the look and feel and within the content itself.

Remember, native advertising isn't a single ad format, but a way of styling and integrating ads with content. With that in mind, think beyond just customizing your ads to match the look and feel of your site. Instead, determine your site's unique value by asking questions like, "what about my site do users tell their friends about?" and "why would



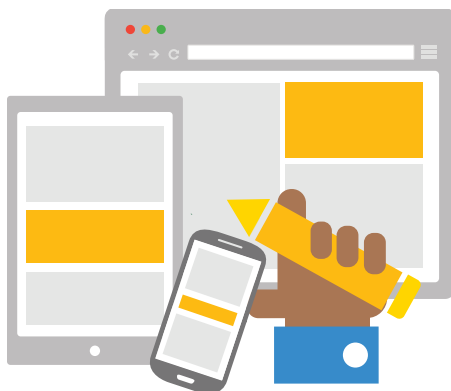
users come to my site versus other options?". With the answers to these questions, you can work with advertisers and enable them to craft a similarly engaging experience for your audience, and choose the appropriate native ad format for you.

For example, if your site's known for providing thought provoking, long-form journalism, consider providing custom sponsored content just as thought provoking as your original content. Please your audience with creative stories that remain consistent with your site's point of view and values.



Use the same voice that your audience is familiar with. This type of native ad is often referred to as “custom sponsored content.” [Here's an example](#) of custom sponsored content created by [LittleThings.com](#) for eBay.

3. Consider how to maximize your user experience and ad revenue before implementing native ads



Incorporating native ads on your site may improve your current ad experience through new, engaging formats that seamlessly fit into your site. It's important to consider how to create the best user experience and maximize your ad revenue with these changes before diving in. Here are a few things to keep in mind:

- If you're adding additional ad units, consider the user's experience and your ad network's policies. It's important to balance the number of ads and the amount of content

on your site to keep your users engaged and avoid over-displaying ads.

- Be sure to test your new native ads if you're replacing them with standard ad units to estimate the potential impact on your revenue.
- Test different types of native ad formats for the devices and platforms your content is consumed on like desktop, mobile, AMP, etc. Consider implementing a responsive native ads strategy so that changes you make work across different screens seamlessly. Native can unlock new inventory on mobile screens.



- Be sure that your implementation of native ads [improves viewability](#). According to a study we conducted of our display advertising platforms, **less than half of all impressions are ever seen by users**—nailing viewability is a big deal.⁵

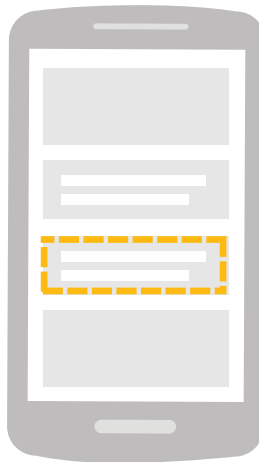


Unfortunately, there isn't a one-size-fits-all solution to these considerations. It's important that you look through your own site, and use tools like [Active View](#) to surface what the most seen areas of your site are and pinpoint what the best advertising strategies are for those areas.

⁵ ["5 Factors of Display Viewability"](#), Think with Google, 2014.

4. Ensure you have the time and resources for proper implementation

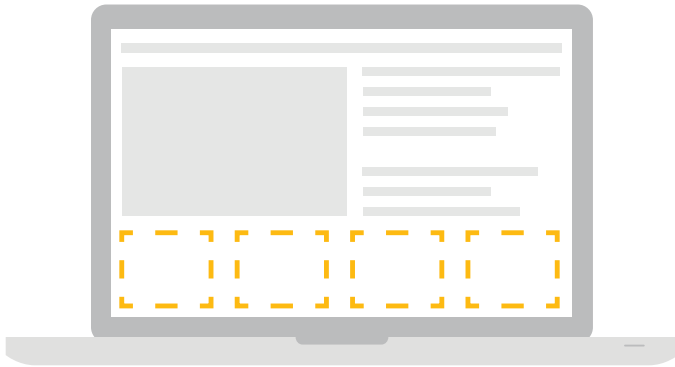
Success with native ads is dependent on proper implementation – they need to be the right format for your site and users, fit with your site’s aesthetics, and be clearly labeled as an ad. And, depending on the type of native ads you choose, implementation could require more effort than expected.



In-feed native ad units

For in-feed native ad units, it'll take upfront time to properly create beautiful ad templates that incorporate the look and feel of your site. In addition to creative implementation, you'll have to spend time tweaking your

filters and targeting options to ensure that the ads are compelling to your users. Learn more about what allowing and blocking ads looks like for AdSense [here](#).



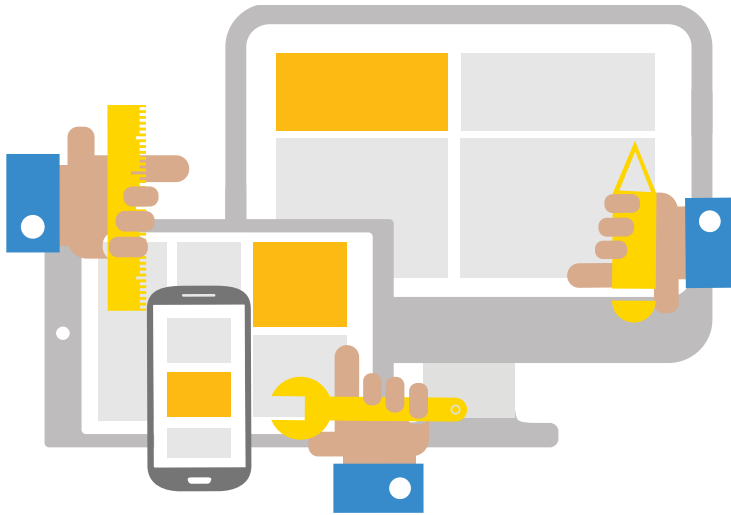
Sponsored content

For custom sponsored content, you may need to spend time putting together a piece in collaboration with advertisers. Depending on the agreement with your advertisers, you may have to bake in extra time for

revision requests in addition to strategically planning the core message of the piece.

65% of US agency and brand professionals claim that the biggest challenge for native advertising is that it's "difficult to track" and that there's "a lack of reporting".⁶

⁶ "Biggest Challenges of Native Advertising According to US Agency and Brand Professionals, Q4 2015", eMarketer, 2015.



Take the time to set campaign expectations with advertisers and incorporate the necessary analytics platforms to measure impact for them – this could take time. Depending on the campaign’s goals, you may need an elaborate setup that ties click-through rates with actual conversions or a simpler system that measures user engagement metrics like impressions and time spent on page.