



JAMES **SCHRAMKO**

EXPLORING CHANGES IN PAID TRAFFIC FOR 2024

Digital advertising is not static, and 2024 has its share of changes. Join James and expert Ilana Wechsler as they explore shifts in paid ad strategy.



Ilana Wechsler

James: James Schramko here. Welcome back to my podcast. This is episode 1066. Today, we're having a look at what's changed in the world of traffic for 2024. I've brought along [Ilana Wechsler](#) from [TeachTraffic.com](#). Hello, Ilana.

Ilana: Hi, James, how are you going?

James: Good. Former data analyst there, running a membership, helping people with their traffic campaigns. You've got a particular skill set of being able to look at different platforms and see how they interplay. I know you've been doing stuff with Google, Facebook, and YouTube.

But I imagine there's been some changes going on in your marketplace, because you're an educator, and because you also have an agency on the side there. You get to see lots of information, and through your clients, you're seeing things happen.

The shifting landscape of paid traffic

Is the world of paid traffic changing?

Ilana: Absolutely, James, and 2024 is no different. I'm sure it won't come as a surprise to people that it is constantly changing space as the platforms change. And technology really, really advances. And the biggest change, which would be no surprise to any of your listeners or yourself, is the massive advancement of AI. And not only is that, you know, having a ripple effect in business, and people's jobs sort of becoming, perhaps, you know, people needing to change their job descriptions, but it's impacting the digital media platforms.

And slowly but surely, these advertising platforms are taking away the micro controls that we have had at our disposal. It's not fully automated yet, but it is no doubt where it is absolutely heading. And the different platforms have their different nuances to it.

But yeah, they are going towards a scenario where their dreams - these advertising platform's dream scenario would be that essentially you just give it your website and a budget, and they go away and find your customers. But it doesn't work that way, always, straightaway. So yeah, AI is being a massive disrupter in the digital advertising space.

The impact of AI on paid advertising

James: How would we paraphrase that? Would it be fair to say that AI is helping make really basic advertisers lift their game to a reasonable level, but it could also pull back an advanced advertiser with intelligent features that aren't doing it any favors?

Ilana: I think it depends on which platform you're talking about. I think I have a bit of an unfair advantage in the fact that as you said, at the start of the show, I do still have an agency - admittedly not a big one, because I like to keep it small - so I have access to my client accounts. But I also have the unfair advantage of helping a lot of people inside Teach Traffic, and they give me access to their accounts. So I see their accounts as well, even though I'm not managing it myself. So I see trends, different trends on different platforms.

So on the Meta side, you know, Facebook and Insta, it is absolutely less about the micro targeting. All those really, micro audiences have long been taken away from advertisers. And it is 100% more about the creative, and the creative asset that you're promoting. Which one might argue then that digital agency has sort of changed its offering away from being real data analysis and technical stuff, but towards more of a creative agency.

And on the Google side of things, it is still probably more data-related. And depending on what you're doing, there is definitely a creative, massive creative component, but probably not as much as Meta.

James: Right. So where does that sit in relation to what I was saying? Does it help your beginner advertiser? Does it hurt the advanced advertiser, or is it something that could work for either of them?

Ilana: I think it depends on where your skill set lies. But I think it has lowered. It's been better for the less sophisticated advertiser, because the platforms are a lot more forgiving in the fact that you might have done something wrong technically, right? Because they might not be technically savvy, but they're more forgiving, because you've actually had a really good ad that carries its weight through possibly being not the best advertiser. Does that kind of explain it?

So I think it's bridge the gap is probably the best way to say it, and that the massive advantage that sophisticated advertisers had over small business, that gap is really widening. I mean, sorry, narrowing, not widening, it was wide. [laughs]

Should you or shouldn't you hire an agency?

James: So that's interesting. So does this change the point at where someone has to make that decision between whether they engage in agency or whether they take it on by themselves or with an in-house point person getting help from and support from someone like you?

Ilana: I genuinely believe so. And this is something I've been saying for a while now, that anyone who spends really less than \$10,000 a month on ads, with the platforms directly, in my opinion, really like, it all feels like over-engineering to have an agency manage it for you.

There's not a lot that they can really do that after a few months aren't - they're not making massive changes that sort of, most people aren't aware of how an ad account works. The first few months are, you know that you're getting the strategy right, and you're getting your ads right.

And once it's sort of humming along and converting nicely, it does enter what's called maintenance mode, where there are things that need to be done, small changes that need to be made to sort of keep it on track, but there's no massive pivots going on. We're just keeping things humming along nicely.

So for many businesses that, as I said, spend below that 10K threshold, in my opinion, it's like sort of over-engineering, it's like borrowing a, you know, Ferrari to go and buy a local milk from the corner store, you know, and so, I'm not saying there's not a place for agencies in the world. Absolutely.

And if you're spending a huge chunk of money on ad networks, you've got multiple funnels going on, multiple locations, sure, that is an agency's job. But for most small business, particularly around the five to 10K mark, a bit of guidance on strategy, setting it up nicely, and getting it humming along well, will see you actually get really good results. And it won't be costing you a fortune in agency fees, so that you can spend what you would be spending on agency fees, just more on ads.

Between education and done-for-you

James: And so, if that's the category between agency and getting help, what is the category between trusting the platform's education center and trying to do it all by yourself versus paying you, for example, to join your Intensive level where you're looking over their shoulder? What would be the difference there?

Ilana: The difference would be that they might not get their strategy correct. They would be listening to, for example, let's say Google, right? Google's latest and greatest product - latest, it's been around for some time, but you talk to any Google rep, they will automatically push you into what's called a [Performance Max Campaign](#), which is definitely not for everybody.

And even if it is the right campaign for you, you need to set it up in such a way that it is designed for optimal success. Google doesn't tell you that. You need to structure it correctly, you need to have audience signals and all this kind of technical stuff, which once you do, once, it's away, you know. But if you don't do that, in the beginning, it's sort of a bit of a recipe for disaster, because then it doesn't work well. And then the data signals aren't being fed into the algorithm. And so begins kind of a bit of a downward spiral.

So I wouldn't - if you do decide to, think, yes, I'm going to give it a go myself, I would urge you to get, obviously through my program, but even if you don't use my program, somebody else is, just get educated somewhat, so that you understand how these campaign types work and these platforms work, so that you have the best chance of success.

Because what's going to happen is you're going to think, no, I don't need anyone, I'm just going to do it myself. I'm going to follow the default prompts. And it's going to be a disaster, and then you're going to throw your hands up and think, Ah, this is too hard. I can't do this. I'm going to just hire someone to do it, or I'm not going to do it at all, which are both bad scenarios.

When traffic strategy doesn't work...

James: My experience, it's one then the other. People hire someone, don't get the result, they blow all their budget, and then they don't do anything at all. That is like the classic paid traffic pathway.

Ilana: Exactly.

James: Try it, fail, stop, finished.

Ilana: And then say, It doesn't work for me. And I don't understand how my competitors are still doing it. And surely, they must be losing money or what have I done wrong, but I'm too scared. And I've been too burnt to do it again.

And I've just helped so many people in so many different industries with this hybrid model where it's like, they get access to me and I'm like, Do this. Don't do that. And let's implement that. And let's see how it goes. Let's have a check in, and we'll have a look at the data.

They can have access to my trained team to make some small changes that they need. And then they're still managing it themselves, they're still empowering themselves, they're still learning, possibly training a team member, because I believe it's a really important skill to have in-house in your company.

James: Well, the thing that comes to mind is Peter Drucker's quote, about doing things effectively. Like, doing the right things is more important. That sounds like, whether you go with an agency or an education membership, the big difference between doing that versus doing it yourself is that you'll have someone helping you do the right things, whether you're doing it or someone's doing it for you.

With the agency, you will pay more, but you're generally going to have a bigger exposure, because you're spending more. So for someone spending \$5,000 a month on ads, it sounds that they would fairly quickly get a return on investment in the education membership because they're only going to be doing the right things. And they'll have someone telling them when things don't go right what to do next.

Where help makes a significant difference

I'll give you an example. I've had an ad running to give away [my book](#) for ages on Facebook. But out of nowhere, it happens probably once every five or six months, the ads get declined for whatever - the exact same ads have been running, just ticking along completely all by itself. And then for no reason that I can see, like we have not changed a single thing, they just suddenly reject them. And they have to be resubmitted.

Knowing what to change and how to resubmit without getting your account banned is a significant difference between trying to figure it out yourself and getting help. Because when I did get my account banned, and just start to wind the clock back, I was running ads on Facebook in like 2008. But so I ran them for ages.

And then at some point, my account got banned for like, seven or eight years, and I just didn't bother. And then the positive was I was able to build my business really strong outside of that platform. But adding in that extra advertising campaign certainly helps. So having that help on knowing what things to work on is critical.

Ilana: I couldn't agree with you more. And to give another example, there's somebody - and I'll obviously protect their identity in their business - but I've been helping them for a couple of months now. And what's interesting is they've got a really successful business.

The first month that we were working together, we actually didn't even touch their traffic campaigns. They had all these problems, not problems, but you know, areas for improvement on their website, you know? For example, I helped them sort of identify that their best customers are people who order a certain quantity, right?

So we made a really small change on his website that when they select a quantity greater than that number, he just wants to get on the phone with them. So we then had that thing come up saying, schedule a call. And tightening up these little elements, from a conversion point of view, before we start pouring more traffic into his website, has made a massive, massive difference.

So we've tightened up all these holes in his bucket before we turn on the hose, so that he's ready for the hose, you know? And if he were to go to an agency, they would just like, Alright, let's just pour traffic onto your website, because that's what our job is, we don't get paid unless we're running campaigns.

And it's like, well, actually, that's not in the best interest for you right now. Because you're just going to be wasting a whole bunch of money. The people who ordered this, you know, 50 plus quantity item, they're going to slip through the cracks for you. And they actually - we worked out how much they are a value to him, that type of customer. It's just a no-brainer.

So there's a whole - you know, one must look at the helicopter view of actually somebody's holistic business, and how traffic fits into it as one piece of the pie, but it's not the entire pie.

I had another person I'm helping where they're in the financial services industry. And they were just going straight for the sale. And I'm like, let's just try and get people to book in a free introductory call. Like, we're not trying to go straight for the sale, we're going to just sell the call. And on the call, you make the sale. And so, just changing that call to action. And then we start pouring the traffic in, and we can see how that works.

And we were using a pop-up split testing headlines until we know which headline works, and then we put that in the ad, and you're really kind of guiding people through and helping them make little changes that incrementally add up to make massive changes.

James: And I imagine over a cross section of clients, you get to see different methodologies for different categories. Might be different for software versus e-commerce versus a coach, author, expert, or an agency, for example.

Ilana: Or a dentist. [laughs]

James: Right, a local business. Of course, they're going to have very different - ah, they're doing far too well for my family, those people.

Ilana: Orthodontists in my family, that's for sure.

James: Yeah, same. Sorry to lump them in together, they'd be highly offended about that. Yeah, those ones, they're making the most.

So yeah, basically, if you are trying to set it all up yourself, you've got to try and guess what the pathway is, versus someone who's already seen it work for others can just say, We'll try this first.

The price of learning what to do

How much do people have to spend to get educated beyond what's provided by the platform? I know there's courses and stuff out there. And at one point, I think you used to teach at a university, as well. So there's lots of ways to learn. Let's say that your way to learn is an effective way because it's dynamic versus static.

So you're constantly updating your material. But also, your knowledge base of use cases is constantly growing week by week, you're seeing new things unfold as the platforms make adjustments. But what would someone have to invest, and how much would they need to spend to get a return on investment?

Ilana: So the base level of [Teach Traffic](#) is 199 US dollars a month. And obviously, that includes all the course content, and, you know, one on one sort of forum access, much like your membership, James, with me directly. But for the people who want to work more closely with me, as you mentioned, during the show, I have the intensive level of membership, where we meet on Zoom once a week and go through the ad accounts together.

It isn't a small group format, but they also have access to my team. So they can - if they get stuck, we've got somebody that will just keep them moving forward. And that's 799 US dollars a month, and they're the people I'm really helping probably more intimately in terms of the nuances of their business, getting a real look under the hood.

And yeah, they have obviously access to me with like, the 10 years' experience that I've had in working in paid traffic in the multitude of niches that I've had exposure to. And also like, I guess, it's kind of like, I'm like a doctor with a second opinion, you know? Like it's, I kind of have a helicopter view of what they're doing and go, Well, why are you doing that? Or why aren't you focusing on just on these people? Like with that first particular client I was talking about.

And obviously, it's month by month, you can just see how you go and see if you get value from it. And as you say, like, what would be the return on investment for someone? Well, it depends how much a client is worth to them. If they're selling a \$10 item, then sure, probably not. But for a financial services client, they're worth thousands. Just if they could get one extra month by making a small change in and then that grows over time, then it's just a no-brainer.

A journey through Ilana's intensive program

James: And so, what does that look like? Like if I could ask you to wind the clock back to someone who's in that Intensive level program, no names required or whatever. But what's the typical journey look like for a client? Like maybe one who's gone past the fixing the holes in the bucket where you're actually running campaigns, and how's the interaction with the team? Because that sounds like an interesting dynamic.

Ilana: Yeah, so I've been helping this one particular person for over a year now, she's been in Intensive. And in the beginning, their business was sort of not in a great position, they had lost a lot of organic rankings. And they were like, I've got to try paid traffic because my salespeople need leads. Like, I'm going to lose the sales staff, if I don't feed them leads.

And admittedly, it was a bit of a gamble. And the campaigns that I guided her build, admittedly, didn't hit it out of the park straight out of the gates. But we identified why, made pivots. And then it really started to work. And as I sort of was telling you, before, incrementally, we make little, little changes. And now we're at a point where as I said, we're still working together a year later, the campaigns pretty much run themselves. They're very much in maintenance mode.

I don't actually even speak to her every week. They're just running along nicely. She sends a little email to my team saying, Hey, can you make this change? She doesn't have to hire someone for that. She knows it will be done in the correct manner. And she's got me as her guide when she needs me or when she wants to try out something new.

And so pretty much most of the money she's spending on the ads herself, you know, she's like, Okay, I want to focus more on America. My American salespeople are a little low on leads, but pump that up. How should I do this? And I'm like, Well, you know, just do it slowly, because you can't make massive algorithm changes with budget changes.

And so, yeah, like, as I said, I think it's better because as an agency, I would be trying to sort of justify my existence, and we're doing all this, but sometimes you just don't need to. The campaigns are working, the salespeople are happy, they're getting good quality leads. And she can then focus on other areas of her business of trying to restore her SEO rankings and all these other aspects, in the knowledge and comfort that these paid traffic campaigns are humming along really, really nicely.

A photograph of a person wearing a grey suit jacket and a white shirt, with their hands clasped together on a light-colored desk. The background is a dark, solid color.

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The better you
do your job,
the less obvious
need there is.

JAMES SCHRAMKO

James: It's a paradox, isn't it, the better you do your job, the less obvious need there is. I love this saying, I think it was from Kevin Nations, don't get clients who need you but don't want you, get clients who want you but don't need you. And, you know, thinking back to my old role as a general manager, when I was employed, the pinnacle of success for me was when I pretty much made my role redundant. I had everybody in the right roles, doing the right things with operating procedures.

It was, as my mentor explained to me, he said, It's like steering a Formula One car with just a fingertip down the street at 320 kilometers an hour. It was magic when you get to that position. And I like that, too. In my Mentor calls, when my clients say, Hey, everything's running smoothly, I know what I'm supposed to be doing, I feel like this is a job well done.

When the client knows what to do

So when your client is saying, Oh, can your team put these negative keywords, and we need to dial up the budget a little bit on this market, is that because you've trained them over time to know that's what they're supposed to be doing?

Ilana: The client, you mean?

James: Yeah.



Ilana: Yeah, well, I mean, paid traffic is not set and forget. So it can't be ignored. But the amount of work that's required to keep it going is really minimal. So this client knows the negative keywords - like, my team don't understand the nuances of her business, because we're not really, she's not a client in the agency, so they haven't had to learn it.

So she scans through to find the nuances of language, to find the negative keywords, but she doesn't want to waste her time with adding them individually to all the campaigns. So then she sends that to my team. And in terms of budget, well, she knows where her salespeople are needing more leads. So she's just turning up the dial, turning down the dial based on feedback she's getting in her internal communications. And so therefore, she controls that dial, essentially.


Transitioning from agency help

James: So if someone was dealing with an agency, and they'd done all that groundwork, setting up the strategies and the campaigns and getting the direction going and establishing a baseline for conversions, but they're feeling - and this happens - sometimes the client feels like, well, it's all done now, I'm just going to switch it off, would Intensive be a good safety net to bridge across to instead of stopping altogether, having an agency?

Ilana: It would, particularly if you're unsure about what to do, right? Like I've had people who had exactly that scenario, right, where they've had an agency and they manage it, but they kind of felt the agency's lost interest in their ad account as they're hunting for new accounts, right? Which often happens.

And so they're like, you know, I'm taking it over, but then they're too scared to make changes for fear of ruining what the agency has done. They're like, Oh, do I do this? Or what's going to be the impact? Am I going to like, undo the work that's been done? And so having someone be able to say, Yes, you can do that. No, you don't do that. That's going to be really bad.

Classic example, right, is somebody else, they had a whole bunch of campaigns running, they took the account over. Then Google called them and said, Ah, you have to launch this type of campaign. And so they launched what's called the [Performance Max Campaign](#), which I mentioned, not realizing that Performance Max is what's called a high-priority campaign, and it actually cannibalizes your other campaigns, your existing search campaigns, etc.



JAMES **SCHRAMKO**

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Having someone to tell you what is worth listening to, and what needs to be ignored, is critical.

ILANA WECHSLER

So they blindly launched this and then realized, Hang on a minute. My other campaigns which were running along beautifully, aren't spending their budget. So they're upping the budget and confused, not knowing the impact of running these different campaign types in parallel. Of course, Google wouldn't tell you that. They say, Ah, the numbers are really good. You know, your ads will be seen everywhere. So yeah, having someone to tell you what is worth listening to, and what needs to be ignored, is critical. Because otherwise, I said, you're going to be scared.

James: I think the sounding board aspect is so strong. And especially because we get bombarded with opportunities to make changes. I do get approached by - well it seems like it's Facebook all the time, wanting to talk to their account manager for suggestions on my campaigns etc. - but I don't really have a high level of trust that they would know what they're doing or that it would be beneficial for me.

Ilana: Exactly, because they're salespeople. I literally get calls every single day. And in fact, James, while we've been recording this, I've seen my phone flashing, with Google calling. Because I have access to so many ad accounts, because like, the way I help people, right, they give me access to their ad account. And literally every day, I get a call saying, Are you the manager of this account? We want to talk to you about our latest thing. So they are salespeople, they have KPIs to meet. And what they tell you is not in your best interest for your business.

James: That's kind of like the classic [retainer model](#) that can be a bit of a conflict for agencies. And I've spoken about this with previous guests where when the ad agency gets paid a percentage of ad spend, they literally get paid more than more that they could spend. So there has to be some other criteria other than just how much you're spending to deem what's successful.

And I think that's why people burn out on agencies so quick. They blow all their budget, they learn all this data, and then the budget's gone, and then now they're stuck. They're just exactly where they were before but with a bigger debt and didn't get the result. Because the result sounds amazing, like it's such an amazing thing to think you could spend \$1 and make more than \$1 back, but the execution is the hard part, right?

The platforms Ilana works with

Could you describe, where are you spending most of your attention in terms of platforms these days?

Ilana: One hundred percent on Google, but that just could be the nature of the type of people I help, they have classic Google businesses. And you know, I'm inherently a Google person. If I had to choose which platform I would spend the most time on, it would 100% be Google.

Personally, I find Facebook just, it's a roller coaster ride. It's like white knuckle stuff. It's like you're up one day, you're down the next, I don't know, like, I'm a really stable person. I just want, like, you know, a boat going through an icebreaker. You know? I don't want roller coaster stuff. So I naturally have gravitated towards that. It just, it's a much more stable ad platform. It is a lot more transparent in terms of where my ads are actually showing.

I think it's the perfect testing ground for many businesses for the intent factor. You know, we know exactly we're getting in front of our target audience because we had a look to what they typed in. And if that's not converting, well, then we need to fix the holes in the bucket before we, you know, so it probably lends itself to the data analyst inside me, I would say. But you know, Meta has its place in the world as well.

YouTube's role in advertising

James: Where does YouTube come into that? I mean, it's owned by Google.

Ilana: It is owned by Google. YouTube has changed massively as well. As we've spoken about, James, before, I am focusing a lot on my own personal YouTube channel to build retargeting audiences within the Google sphere. YouTube ads, though, is a completely different beast, obviously. And a lot of the micro targeting, which one could do, has been taken away.

So for many advertisers, it's a tough nut to crack. Like, once you crack it, it is amazing. But for many people, it is really tough. And for local businesses, I would say it's like, you wouldn't, you know, for the financial services people or a dentist, definitely don't even engage in it.

But there are many ways to play in that arena, much like I am with my YouTube channel. I post YouTube content, create an engagement audience of anyone who watches any video, and then I run a dynamic search campaign just for that audience so I can see what people are searching for.

James: So for example, the latest video that I published at this time was relating to [hiring virtual assistants in the Philippines](#). And the call to action for that is to hire the agency that I'm co-founder of, [VisionFind.com](#). I could run a campaign where I'm collecting the people who view that video and then run an ad on Google for those people for the agency?

Ilana: Yup. So you could do exactly that. Anyone who watches that specific video, you know, they are interested or thinking about hiring a virtual assistant. So even if they don't go to your website, they don't click on your call to action in the video description, the mere fact that they have watched that video, they are put into an audience.

And if then at a later time, they are Google searching, what you think they may be searching for, which is virtual assistant, you can show an ad just to them. Or what I'm doing is, I'm not even bidding on a keyword. I'm telling Google, tell me what they are searching for that is a match for the content on my website, so I can discover what they're searching for.

James: Yeah, I hope people get the power of this. This falls into the category of knowing that this is an option that is available to you.

Are you sitting on assets you don't use?

So I ask you this, if you're listening to this, or watching the show, like, do you have those campaigns in place already? Because if you don't, then that's where the education side of things could really be powerful, like knowing what options are available to you and then getting help to set these up. That could be a dynamite stick in your business just to blow things up from where they're at. Because, would it be fair to say most people are sitting on assets they're not utilizing?

Ilana: Absolutely, exactly. And it's knowing how to do it in the right way that it doesn't go beyond that audience. Right? So if you were to try and do it yourself, you'd think, oh, yeah, I'm going to listen to Ilana, and I'm going to do this and implement it, you can very, very easily set it up in such a way that you go beyond the audience that you've selected to everyone. And you actually do not want to do that, because you only want to be advertising to that small portion of people who've watched that video, because you know they are interested in a virtual assistant.

James: I mean, this actually carries straight back to the very scripting and planning of a video like the one I've described. And I know you do this with your own organic content, that you make that video for a specific person, and don't try and make it for everybody. There's no point making that video for people who want to hire someone in India, or who want to hire a work-at-home mom in California. That video is not for that audience. So being specific still pays.

So what I'm taking from this is some of the platforms have removed some of the tools to be specific, but you still know how to be specific with the way you set the campaigns up, regardless.

Ilana: Correct. Yes. And for now, while they're allowing us to do it, I'm going to keep doing it, knowing at some point that will be taken away from me, and then maybe I can find another workaround or not. But for now, let's make the most of it. Because, as I know, nothing lasts forever. [laughs]

James: I reckon you will, Ilana, I reckon you will. So how do we get on to that [TeachTraffic.com](https://www.teachtraffic.com), the program you recommend for people spending what, five, 10 grand a month, you'd say Intensive is a good place to be?

Ilana: I believe so. And then I'm in a better position to help them. And then we can decide, you know, is this going to work? Is this not? Let's have a look at your assets. Let's look at what has worked in the past, what hasn't, and come up with a plan. And hey, it might not work straight out of the gates. But we're going to look at the data, pivot and adjust accordingly, and course correct, and get on the right track like the multitude of other people that I've helped.

James: Love it. Thank you so much.

Ilana: Thank you so much, James.

James: All right, we'll put all the show notes up on Episode 1066. Also, this podcast is available on [Spotify](#), it's on [Apple](#), it's on [YouTube](#), so wherever you subscribe, make sure you get future episodes.

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