

CASE STUDY — CREATIVE STRATEGY / E-COMMERCE

Speaking to the Right Person

Two advisory engagements with Meta top-spending advertisers — same discovery in different disguises: creative that performs isn't always creative that converts.

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CONTEXT

Some of the clearest fixes in performance marketing have nothing to do with budget, bidding, or targeting settings. They come from a more basic question: who, exactly, is this creative talking to — and does it give that person what they need to say yes? Two accounts from the same advisory period, in two unrelated categories, turned out to share the same answer.

ACCOUNT ONE — CHILDREN'S CLOTHING

Talking to the wrong person entirely

A children's clothing e-commerce brand, and an instinct behind its creative that was reasonable on its face: the children were front and center, dressed, styled, smiling into camera. What that instinct missed is who actually clicks “buy.” Not the child — the parent. The communication was, in effect, addressed to someone with no purchasing power at all.

The fix started from the fundamentals rather than a tweak: video built specifically to speak to a parent, not to charm a child. A clear call to action. Pacing built for someone scrolling quickly, not lingering. The brand visible throughout, its name surfaced in the first seconds rather than earned slowly. None of it clever — all of it aimed, for the first time, at the person actually making the decision. No single number to point to here, but a clear read from the client's own side: sales moved, noticeably.

ACCOUNT TWO — BOARD GAME

Evocative, but not understood

A different client, a different failure mode: a niche personality-driven board game whose video ads had real character — evocative, well-produced, genuinely good at holding attention. What they weren't doing was converting, and the obvious fix — more of the same energy, refreshed — would have missed why.

The answer came from looking past the metrics creative usually gets judged on. Buried in the account's own data was the tell: among a set of visually striking, mood-driven videos, the one holding attention longest wasn't the most evocative one. It was the plainest — the one that simply described what the game was and how it played. People weren't disengaged. They were curious and confused in roughly equal measure, and a format built to spark curiosity was never designed to resolve it.

The fix followed the data rather than the instinct: a set of more explanatory videos, built to answer “what actually is this,” retargeted directly at the people the evocative creative had already caught — an audience with attention already earned, just never given what it needed to convert. No hard number here either, but an unmistakable before-and-after: sales that had been sporadic and essentially unpredictable became something the account could count on.

THE THREAD

Neither problem showed up in the metrics people usually check first — reach, engagement, watch time. Both only showed up once the question changed from “is this working” to “who is this actually working on.” Different categories, different failure modes — one a wrong audience entirely, the other a right audience left half-informed — but the same fix underneath: stop optimizing for whether the ad performs, and start checking whether the person it's actually reaching has what they need to buy.

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