Advertising Manager interview questions

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What to expect

Advertising manager interviews are typically a two or three stage process: a recruiter screen, a hiring manager conversation that digs into campaign work, and often a panel or presentation round with senior marketing or agency leadership. Expect the conversation to move between your commercial judgement, your creative instincts and how you handle clients and teams.

- **Process and campaign walk-through:** You will be asked to talk through how you plan, launch and optimise a campaign from brief to wrap report, often using a real example.
- **Behavioural:** Questions about campaigns that underperformed, difficult clients, or leading a team through a change or a tight deadline.
- **Scenario and judgement:** Budget cuts mid-campaign, a client rejecting strong creative, a competitor moving first. They want to see how you think under pressure.
- **Technical and measurement:** Channel mix decisions, attribution, experimentation and platform questions covering Google Ads, Meta Ads Manager, GA4, Adobe Analytics and Salesforce Marketing Cloud.
- **Commercial and negotiation:** How you set budgets, evaluate media packages and negotiate with publishers, platforms and agencies.
- **Client facing:** Pitching, presenting results to senior stakeholders and handling disagreement about strategy or creative.

A typical structure starts with the recruiter screen covering background and salary expectations, then a hiring manager interview that is roughly half behavioural and half campaign walk-through. The final round is often a panel of two to four people, sometimes with a short presentation where you critique a live campaign or outline an approach to a hypothetical brief, followed by your own questions for the panel. Agency roles often include a portfolio or case study review.

1. Walk me through how you would plan and launch an advertising campaign for a new product across multiple channels.

Why they ask

This is the core test of whether you actually run campaigns end to end or only one slice of them. They want to see structure, sequencing and where you involve other people.

How to structure your answer

Give a short framing statement about how you approach campaign planning, then walk through it in sequence: brief and objectives, audience, channel selection, budget split, creative development, tracking setup, launch, in-flight optimisation, wrap report. Land on one decision you would make differently depending on the brief, so it does not sound like a template.

Example answer

“I start by getting the objective into a form you can measure, because 'build awareness' and 'drive sign-ups' lead to completely different plans. If we are launching a new product, I would normally set a primary metric and two or three supporting ones, then work out the audience and the moments where they are most receptive. From there I pick the channel mix. A new product usually needs some reach building, so I would put a share into broadcast or connected television and video, and pair that with paid search and social for the people who go looking afterwards. I brief creative and media in parallel rather than in sequence, with a shared deadline so neither holds the other up. Before launch I confirm tracking with whoever owns the analytics side, because a campaign you cannot measure is just spending. In the first two weeks I watch frequency and cost per conversion closely and make small

adjustments rather than big ones, then at the four week mark I do a fuller review and move budget toward whatever is actually converting. At the end I write up what worked, what did not, and what I would change, and I take that back to the client before the next brief.”

2. Tell me about a time a campaign underperformed and what you did about it.

Why they ask

Every advertiser has a campaign that misses. They are checking whether you diagnose rather than panic, and whether you are honest with the client.

How to structure your answer

STAR. Keep the situation and task brief, spend most of your time on the action, and make the result specific in terms of what changed, not just that it improved.

Example answer

“We launched a spring campaign for a homewares client and by the end of the first fortnight the cost per acquisition was running well above what we had forecast, with most of it sitting in one social channel. My task was to either fix it or move the money before the campaign lost its window. I pulled the data apart by audience segment and creative, and found the problem was narrower than it looked: two of the six creative variants were eating most of the spend and converting poorly, and the audience was skewed older than the brief intended. I paused the weak variants, reallocated about a third of the channel budget into search and a retail media placement that had been performing quietly, and briefed two quick replacement creatives targeted at the younger segment. I also told the client what was happening that week rather than waiting for the monthly report. By the end of the campaign we finished close to the original target on acquisitions, and more importantly the client kept the revised channel mix for the following season because it held up on the numbers.”

3. Your biggest client tells you they are cutting the campaign budget by a third, midway through. What do you do?

Why they ask

This is a judgement and stakeholder question. They want to see you protect the client relationship and the work without pretending the cut does not matter.

How to structure your answer

Acknowledge the constraint, then work through it: what you need to know, what options you can put on the table, what you would protect and what you would cut, and how you would communicate it. Show a decision, not just a list of considerations.

Example answer

“First I would ask what is driving the cut and whether it is a one-off or the start of something longer, because that changes the response. Then I would look at the campaign in two buckets: what is committed and hard to unwind, and what is still flexible. Media booked well ahead often has cancellation terms, so I would check those before promising anything. My instinct would be to protect the channels that are converting and the creative that is performing, and reduce the reach building side, because you can rebuild awareness later but you cannot easily recover a lost sales window. I would put two or three options to the client with the trade-offs spelled out, for example fewer channels at the same weight versus the same channels at lower weight, and recommend one. Then I would get the revised plan in writing, brief the team the same day, and reset expectations on the reporting so nobody is measuring against a target that no longer applies.”

4. How do you decide how to split budget across channels, and how do you know it is working?

Why they ask

This is the technical and measurement question. They are testing whether you understand attribution limits or just quote platform dashboards back at them.

How to structure your answer
Give your framework first, then the measurement approach, then the honest caveat. Interviewers respond well to someone who names the limits of their own data.

Example answer

“I start with the objective and the audience, not with the channels. If the job is demand capture, search and retail media get the first allocation because intent is already there. If it is demand creation, video and social carry more weight, and I accept that the return is harder to prove in the short term. I look at historical performance where we have it, and where we do not, I set a test budget with a clear hypothesis rather than spreading money thinly everywhere. On measurement, I use GA4 and Adobe Analytics for on-site behaviour and conversion, platform reporting for in-flight optimisation, and where the budget justifies it, a geo-based or holdout test to check whether the channels are actually incremental. I am careful about last-click attribution because it consistently over-credits search, so I would rather look at blended cost per acquisition and a couple of controlled tests than argue about which dashboard is right. I report the caveats alongside the numbers so the client knows what is solid and what is directional.”

5. You have a creative team that is strongly attached to a concept the client has rejected. How do you handle it?

Why they ask
People leadership inside a client service environment. They want to see that you can protect your team's morale while still getting the client what they need.

How to structure your answer
Set out your principles, then a concrete approach: separate the idea from the execution, get the real reason for the rejection, involve the team in the response rather than issuing an instruction.

Example answer

“I try not to frame it as the client being wrong, because usually the concept is fine and something about how it lands for their audience or their category is the issue. My first step is to get the actual reason from the client, not the polite version, because 'it does not feel like us' and 'our legal team will not approve it' need very different responses. Then I sit with the creative team, acknowledge that the work was strong, and work through what the rejection is really about. Often the core idea survives and the execution changes, and that is much easier for a team to accept than starting again. If the client has genuinely asked for something weaker, I will say so once, clearly, with a rationale, and then support the decision. I have found that teams handle a bad outcome far better when they have been in the conversation rather than hearing about it after the fact.”

6. A media publisher or platform rep brings you a package. How do you evaluate it and negotiate?

Why they ask
Budget management and negotiation sit squarely in this role. They want to see commercial discipline and a working knowledge of how media is actually bought.

How to structure your answer
Walk through your evaluation criteria, then how you approach the negotiation itself, then how you close it out and document it.

Example answer

“I evaluate any package against the campaign objective first, because a discount on inventory we do not need is not a saving. I look at the audience match, the placements on offer, whether the format suits the creative we can produce in time, and what measurement we will get, including whether we

can bring our own tracking rather than relying on their dashboard. I ask what the rate is against comparable placements and what the package looks like without the bundled extras, because bundles often hide the weaker inventory. In the negotiation I am direct about budget and timing, I ask for added value like bonus inventory or a longer reporting window rather than just a lower rate, and I am prepared to walk away if the fit is not there. Once agreed, I get the rate, placements, flighting and reporting commitments in writing before anything is booked, and I set a review point so we can pull or adjust if it underdelivers."