

With unique Hover-to-Play ads, SpotCo showcases award-winning Broadway show *Once* in a dazzling way, eliciting a strong engagement rate of 3.78%.



About SpotCo

- www.spotnyc.com
- Headquartered in New York, NY
- Full-service live entertainment ad agency

Goals

- Build brand awareness for *Once* show
- Reach new audiences, niche groups at scale
- Let users experience and connect with *Once*

Approach

- Use Google's Display Network for scaled, targeted reach
- Implement Hover-to-Play ads to engage qualified users
- Pay only for engagements with CPE pricing
- Run TrueView video ads on YouTube to target folk fans

Results

- 3.78% engagement rate
- Generated 162,000 engagements
- 4.3 million impressions at no additional cost
- Optimized investment with CPE pricing

Counting more than 250 clients around the world since it entered the scene in 1996, SpotCo is a full-service ad agency serving Broadway, live entertainment, museums, film studios and TV networks. The creative talent behind the memorable ad campaigns for Broadway's *Rent* and *Chicago*, SpotCo combines traditional and digital media to build 360-degree campaigns reflecting each show's brand, target audience and desired reach.

For the past five years, SpotCo has partnered with Google to integrate search and display ads into its diverse marketing mix. To create brand awareness for both show launches and long-running productions, SpotCo reaches new and relevant segments with Google Display, using Engagement Ads and the new Hover-to-Play format in particular. *Once* customers evolve from consideration to purchase, SpotCo reaches them further down the conversion funnel with highly targeted search campaigns.

Captivating audiences with Hover-to-Play ads

One of SpotCo's standout clients is the Broadway show *Once* – winner of eight Tony Awards, including Best Musical in 2012. To build brand awareness for *Once*, SpotCo counts on Google Display to reach both new audiences at scale and niche groups, like theatergoers and music fans. SpotCo used keyword contextual targeting for the *Once* campaign, as well as a custom mix of interest categories to target specific groups like folk music lovers and Broadway aficionados across Google Display.

Looking to provide audiences with a poignant brand experience that would reflect the show itself, SpotCo began using Engagement Ads in March 2013. Engagement Ads are new ad formats that captivate consumers with rich creative messages. Tuned and optimized to user engagement, instead of clicks and conversions, Engagement Ads help find new customers who are interested in your brand message, and allow you to pay only when users engage.

SpotCo chose to use the unique Hover-to-Play ad, a type of Engagement Ad that allows users to interact with the *Once* brand and play a video, without having to click or leave the page. Audiences initially see a static image highlighting *Once*'s awards and seat availability. After hovering over the image for two seconds, the video portion of the ad begins to play, featuring scenes and music from the show. This innovative two-second hover delay eliminates accidental plays and provides a better user experience and more accurate reporting for SpotCo. Engagement Ads' cost-per-engagement (CPE) pricing means SpotCo only pays when a user chooses to hover and interact with the *Once* ad.

Because Hover-to-Play ads bring the full sight, sound and motion power of video to a standard 300x250 display unit, they demonstrate the Broadway experience more comprehensively than text or images alone. "Hover-to-Play ads help give audiences a taste of *Once*. To be able to demonstrate the emotionality and theatricality of the show is huge," says Kyle Young, vice president of digital strategy at SpotCo. He notes that Hover-to-Play ads allow SpotCo to deeply



engage and educate all types of audiences – people familiar with the show, and those new to Broadway – without requiring them to click further or leave the page. SpotCo's Hover-to-Play ads achieved an engagement rate of 3.78% over a 10-week period – a lift of 3.69% when compared to clickthrough rate (CTR) for a similar campaign with identical targeting settings.

CPE pricing, smart algorithms offer more bang for your buck

With the CPE model, SpotCo only pays for qualified users who actively choose to engage with Hover-to-Play ads – there is no cost for impressions. This ensures the *Once* brand message is resonating with only the most interested audiences. Over a 10-week period, the *Once* campaign achieved scaled reach to qualified users, receiving 162,000 engagements at a CPE of \$0.18, and 4.3 million impressions at no additional cost. As the campaign continues to run, Google's adaptive algorithm works to increase engagement rates by optimizing placement of Engagement Ads, showing them to users who are most likely to interact.

Creative digital marketing takes center stage

SpotCo complements its Hover-to-Play campaign with ads on YouTube featuring the same video creative to ensure brand consistency. As these video ads belong to the TrueView family, SpotCo only pays when a viewer chooses to watch the video. The group uses TrueView ads to target a niche audience on YouTube – fans of folk music – with whom the folk-inspired *Once* might resonate. The Hover-to-Play campaign then reinforces and scales that message across Google Display properties.

In addition to experimenting with ads featuring video content, SpotCo is also looking at mobile to reach target markets for *Once* and other shows, as well as Google's new audience targeting solution known as Affinity Segments tools. Eager to expand on its success with Hover-to-Play ads, the group is also planning to try Lightbox ads, another type of Engagement Ad that transforms standard display ads into engaging, multi-dimensional creative canvases that provide a near full-screen experience. "In our industry, we're at a point where it's no longer just planned traditional media," says Kyle. "Online platforms are now part of the initial conversation – we might even see them overshadow traditional media."