



## The Emperor Has No Clothes: The Truth on ROAS and of Marketing Companies and Client Success

I listen to podcasts on my way to and from work almost every day. I hear way more nonsense than actual information I'm willing to hang onto. That being said, there are a few marketing pros out there I think very highly of. One of them being Kasim Aslam, who is a highly respected voice in the digital marketing space. What made him stand out to me the most was when he actually shared that there's no attribution in Google Ads, like none. Ad spend is a line in the sand. If you care to argue the point, please show me the breadcrumb trail of attributing every dollar you sink into GA, to your bank account. This was his argument, and he's 100% correct. However, marketing companies continue to tout and bank on so many solid promises of ROAS. So, with that, it's fair to say that in the field of digital marketing, a concerning trend has emerged: marketing companies seem more focused on selling their expertise, hollow or not, than driving real results for their clients. This misalignment of priorities undermines the very purpose of marketing and leaves many businesses questioning the value of their marketing investments, especially when it comes to ad spend.

### Beware the Self-Serving Cycle

Marketing agencies often fall into a self-serving cycle. They showcase their accomplishments, highlight their unique methodologies, and boast about their industry accomplishments. While these elements can indicate competence, they often ignore what should be the primary focus: the client's bottom line. Who is the superstar in any company? The customer! Who forgets this? Many companies do.

### The ROAS Lie

The elephant in the room is that the marketing industry is over-selling a sales metric titled: return on ad spending (ROAS). However, as Kasim Aslam has pointed out, "there is actually no such thing as attribution in Google Ads". ROAS, in complete truth, is nothing more than an arbitrary line in the sand. Take the example of any company celebrating a ROAS of 400% on their Google Ads campaigns. On the surface, this seems like a resounding success. However, if they dug deeper, they would realize that many of these "attributed" sales were from customers who would have purchased anyway, regardless of the ads. With the number of times you have to put your brand in front of a customer, how on earth are you going to, for certain, know it was a single Google ad that brought you the sale? HubSpot certainly isn't going to tell you. Google isn't going to tell you even though they have the data. If they did, they would lose billions because you've stopped gambling all of your money on P-Max ads altogether. And let's be honest, I've made reference to "if I'm getting 1000x ROAS on my ad spend, why am I not mortgaging my kidneys on ads?" So the truth is, the true impact of any company's ad spend could be far less impressive than the ROAS metric suggested and the lie you're being told by the report card your agency is presenting to you.

## **The Full-Funnel Lie**

Many agencies portray themselves as "full-funnel" experts, promising to handle everything from awareness to conversion. While this approach sounds comprehensive and inviting, it often leads to a jack-of-all-trades, master-of-none scenario. A marketing agency priding itself on some sort of full-funnel approach will easily face backlash from clients who feel their specialized needs are being overlooked. Why? Because they are. By trying to cover all bases, an agency could quickly spread itself too thin, resulting in mediocre performance across multiple channels rather than success for its clients in a few important areas. Imagine if that same agency could use the science behind SEO/GEO to tap into the traffic that does have attribution. Now imagine that same agency simply working harder on your entire brand story at the forefront of their role as your agent and following conversions based on that as their metric. Imagine what small shifts in efforts like this will impact their clients.

## **Prioritizing the Client to Build Better Relationships**

For marketing companies to truly serve their clients, a core shift in approach is necessary:

1. **Client Success Metrics:** Instead of focusing solely on vanity metrics or easily manipulated numbers, agencies should work with clients to establish meaningful, business-oriented KPIs that measure against their brand story.
2. **Transparency and Education:** Marketing companies should be honest and educate their clients about the limitations of certain metrics, such as ROAS. They should also provide a more concrete view of their effort and expected impact, even if it's purely holistic.
3. **Specialization with Actual Purpose:** Rather than claiming expertise in every aspect of marketing, agencies should focus on areas where they can truly excel and drive tangible results for their clients.
4. **Long-Term Partnership Mindset:** Marketing efforts should be aligned with the client's long-term business goals, not just short-term campaign metrics. As an agency/consultant,

treat the client's success as your own, not the other way around.

5. **Continuous Adaptation:** As the digital universe grows, marketing companies must be willing to adapt their strategies and metrics to ensure they're always driving real value for their clients. This means staying on top of every change that occurs. It can almost be a daily task.

### **The Point.**

The marketing industry stands at a major crossroads right now. The emperor – in this case, many marketing companies – indeed has no clothes when it comes to truly prioritizing client success over self-promotion. This was the comment made by Kasim in the podcast, and it resonated BIG because I couldn't put my finger on the problem until he explained it this way. By acknowledging this reality and taking steps to realign their priorities, marketing agencies can shed their promised ROAS fairy dust and instead start pulling the pins on truth grenades, describing what genuine success will look like in front of their clients. Only then can the industry move forward in a way that truly serves businesses and drives meaningful partnership growth. Doing this will allow both marketing companies and their clients the space to remain vigilant, question established norms, and always go for transparency, accountability, and real, measurable impact on the bottom line. The future of effective marketing lies not in selling expertise but in delivering tangible, client-focused results.