

Media Buyer interview questions

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What to expect

Media buyer interviews tend to mix commercial negotiation questions with analytical ones, since the role sits between vendor relationships and campaign data. Expect the panel to probe how you balance budget discipline against reach and how you handle a vendor or client who isn't happy with results.

- **Process:** Walking through how you plan a media schedule or allocate a budget across channels from brief to booking.
- **Behavioural:** Past examples of negotiating with vendors or handling a campaign that wasn't performing to plan.
- **Technical:** Questions on reading campaign data, using platforms like DV360 or Google Analytics, and interpreting reach, frequency and CPM figures.
- **Scenario:** Judgement calls under budget or time pressure, such as a vendor missing delivery targets partway through a campaign.
- **Client-facing:** How you explain media performance and spend decisions to a client or internal marketing team who isn't across the data.

Most interviews open with background and motivation, move into a walk-through of your media planning process, then test negotiation and data-reading skills through behavioural or scenario questions, and usually close with questions about the tools and platforms you've used and your understanding of the industry's commercial pressures.

1. Walk me through how you'd plan a media schedule for a new campaign brief.

Why they ask

Tests whether you understand the end-to-end process from audience analysis to booking and reporting, not just one part of it.

How to structure your answer

Describe each stage in order: audience and channel analysis, budget allocation across channels, vendor negotiation, booking, and the performance tracking that follows.

Example answer

"I'd start by looking at the audience data to work out which channels actually reach them, whether that's programmatic display, radio or outdoor. From there I'd draft a budget split across channels based on expected reach and cost, negotiate rates with the relevant vendors, and lock in the schedule. Once it's live I track impressions and cost per outcome daily in whatever analytics platform we're using, and I'll shift spend between channels if one is clearly outperforming the others."

2. Tell me about a time you negotiated a better rate or terms with a media vendor.

Why they ask

Negotiation is core to the role and the panel wants a concrete example of how you've actually done it, not a general statement about being a good negotiator.

How to structure your answer

Use STAR: situation, task, action, result, focusing on what leverage you used and what the actual outcome was.

Example answer

"A vendor had quoted a rate above what we'd budgeted for a print placement. I pulled together comparable rates from two other publishers and pointed out our booking volume across the campaign period. The vendor came back with a reduced rate and threw in an additional placement at no extra cost, which let us extend reach without going over budget."

3. A campaign is three weeks in and one of your channels is badly underperforming against its reach target. What do you do?

Why they ask

Checks judgement under pressure and whether you can make a data-based call quickly rather than waiting out the full campaign.

How to structure your answer

State the immediate priority, the data you'd check first, the options you'd weigh, and how you'd communicate the change.

Example answer

"First I'd check whether the issue is delivery, targeting or creative, since the fix is different for each. If the placement isn't reaching the right audience, I'd reallocate the remaining budget to the channels that are performing and flag the change to the client or internal stakeholder with the reasoning, rather than letting it run and hoping it improves."

4. How do you read a campaign performance report to know if a placement is actually doing its job?

Why they ask

Tests technical literacy with the metrics and platforms the role relies on day to day.

How to structure your answer

Name the specific metrics you'd look at, explain what each tells you, and give a short example of a decision you made from that data.

Example answer

"I look at reach and frequency first to check we're not overexposing the same audience, then cost per impression or cost per click depending on the channel, and I compare that against the benchmark set at planning stage. If frequency is climbing but reach has flattened, that tells me the placement has saturated its audience and it's time to move budget elsewhere."

5. How would you explain a disappointing campaign result to a client who doesn't work with media data day to day?

Why they ask

Client-facing communication matters because buyers often have to justify spend decisions to people without a media background.

How to structure your answer

Explain how you'd translate the technical result into plain language, what you'd propose as next steps, and how you'd keep the tone constructive.

Example answer

"I'd avoid leading with jargon and start with what actually happened in plain terms, for example that the audience we targeted engaged less than expected on that channel. Then I'd show what we changed mid-campaign to recover it and what I'd recommend differently next time, so it reads as a plan rather than an excuse."

6. What's your experience with programmatic buying platforms like DV360 or The Trade Desk?

Why they ask

Confirms hands-on familiarity with the specific tools the role uses, since this varies a lot between candidates.

How to structure your answer

Give a direct account of which platforms you've used, what you used them for, and one specific feature or workflow you're comfortable with.

Example answer

"I've used DV360 for programmatic display buys, mainly for audience segmentation and setting frequency caps to avoid overexposing the same users. I'm comfortable pulling performance data out of it directly rather than waiting on a separate report, which speeds up how quickly I can adjust a campaign mid-flight."