



# MAU [Talk]

EP. 011

A CONVERSATION WITH:



ACTIVISION

JENNY TARAN

HEAD OF GROWTH, CALL OF DUTY MOBILE

**MAU[Talk] 00:01**

Hey guys! Welcome to MAU [Talk] a podcast from MAU Vegas, the premier mobile acquisition and retention summit. Today Adam talks to Jenny Taran, head of growth for Call of Duty mobile at Activision about high level based implications that affect performance marketing channels in the international sector. Take it away, Adam.

**Adam Lovallo 00:20**

Jenny, welcome to the podcast. So Jenny's spoken at MAU countless times. And is now in a growth role at Activision. I'll let her describe it. But thank you for joining me.

**Jenny Taran 00:35**

Thanks for having me. This is, um, this is my first podcast. This is also probably like the first well maybe like second speaking thing I've done since of any sort since Activision, I just disappeared into like an Activision black hole. It's kind of fun. It's a brooch out a little bit. And this seems like a nice casual way to do so. Um, but yeah, I've actually visited since July of pre COVID. And I started kind of in launching COD mobile and focusing on like the performance marketing stack. So now I'm running like all the marketing, for COD mobile. So everything that touches the game, inside out marketing related, I've been working to build up. So it's been really, really cool, really interesting. And it's a super fascinating product to work for, like a super engaging audience, which is really like a nice kind of change. I like, like all the diversity of products I've had before. But it's a little bit different to like, interact with a teenage audience versus a like, "bingo mom". So it's been pretty fun to branch out.

**Adam Lovallo 01:42**

Yeah. And a passionate audience, no doubt in that game. I mean, is it literally available globally? Or is that thing or?

**Jenny Taran 01:51**

Yeah, so Call of Duty mobile is available globally. Activision publishes it in a bunch of core regions internationally. And then it just launched, as well via our developer, Timmy, in China, and like other regions there. So it's pretty interesting. And we publish it via Garena in Southeast Asia. So we've got like a pretty global footprint, I directly work on kind of like North America, South America, Europe, Japan, basically like core kind of like, Western agents.

**Adam Lovallo 02:28**

Okay, cool. Well, we're gonna talk about international stuff, primarily, but I feel like mobile dev memo is churning out like one blog posts a day about various IDFA whatever stuff. So at a high level, industry wise, you know, not so much Activision specific. What are the biggest changes you think? What are the biggest implications? For instance, one thing Eric has talked a lot about is well, media mix will change because what we conventionally thought of as performance channels, and we'll kind of get less trackable, not totally untrackable, but a lot less so. And therefore, maybe it makes it more appealing to do stuff that's also inherently more difficult to track, like TV or whatever, like, what do you think of that? And what other macro impacts do you envision?

**Jenny Taran 03:18**

So, yeah, so I think that's interesting. I think there's a few things. I think, like, so if you kind of like paint the world of like, performance marketing, it was like this sharp deviation from what we know is traditional media. It's like TV, billboard like that stuff doesn't work. That's for the old age, like now we're gonna run these ads that are highly trackable. We know everything that's going on with the user, whether you're talking about mobile gaming, or like web, essentially. But I think even without those IDFA changes, there's been like a concerted kind of like industry change to evolution of recognizing that that's not necessarily like a realistic point of view on like how to properly grow a product, right? Like you have a lot of, if you're focusing on like only a digital kind of like trackable footprint ad, you're probably missing out on a lot of communication touch points that are important to think about. And so, yes, they're not necessarily trackable in like the traditional sense, but it's kind of like, um, I think not thinking about them and not approaching them with a certain strategy, you're really missing out on kind of like the correct way to, to grow, to grow a product of any kind in today's space, because like, to me, marketing is essentially like you have a user base, that you have a user base you want to hit, you have an audience that you want to hit. And if you only talk to them in one way, then they're tired of hearing that message through that direction, even if you change like the color of your ad 50 times or even if you make it funny, like you need to communicate with everyone on where their like natural landscape is. So I think like, um, I think it's interesting because the IDFA will maybe kind of like, push people into areas that they haven't necessarily been before, like they'll feel comfortable devolving into them. Because maybe there's a little bit more ambiguity in the space. But I actually think that's been happening for a long time. Like, for example, like podcast advertising. Like for, at least for COD mobile, like we do a bunch of stuff with like streamers, influencers, content creators, like, I mean, that's not new, like content creators as a form of like, advertisement has been, like, heavily evolving in our space for I mean, I don't know, at least like 10 years now, right? So I think that, and we do stuff, we do test with TV, we do podcast type things. And we tried to kind of like think about, like, what's really cool ways that we can engage with users, and it's okay, if like, not everything can be tracked back, as long as you're generally looking at, like, what is my overarching kind of like investment, and what's happening after that investment. And so, you know, let's say, like, 80% of your media mix is highly trackable, you have this like 20%, where you're gonna have to take educated guesses, and I think that to be like a good marketer, you know, there is this like, heavy like data science piece and like, analytical piece, and you have to think about that, but you also have to have like an intuition for your audience and being able to speak to them. I actually think like, when I'm just thinking about it now, like, our, like marketing as the space, especially with performance marketing has kind of dwelled in this highly like analytic space space, where you're kind of like, you've got this LTV, you've got to recoup, I think it's become it's so it's kind of like very science based in a way. And it's in way, like marketing. And so user psychology is a science. But I also think that like the differentiator, differentiator between kind of like a core analyst who's going to look at a bunch of numbers and say, like, put more here, put less here, it's like, that's the second piece. And that's like, what makes a marketer versus and engineer, right? It's like, that's like, where you're going to take that, like, people piece that like human psychology and try to like, flip it into, flip it into a decision that you think is going to be best for your business. And like, I think that like the most interesting things that people have done historically, with, like advertising or growing products, they're probably not in like, they probably were just kind of like, like, I have this intuition, I'm going to lean into it, and then I'm going to analyze it the best I can. And if it works, like then I'm gonna, like, try to, like, work off of that, or model off of that and make decisions based off of that. And like, that's your call. That's kind of your analytic side, like, combining with your I don't know, like, left brain, right brain? I don't know.

**Adam Lovallo 07:33**

Yeah, no, I think I think that's it, I think that's exactly right. I mean, versus you know, obsessing over increasing the CPI's in country x by 10 cents or whatever in your bids, which is valuable, but I think can be, I think performance people, myself included, do have a tendency to like over index on that kind of stuff, and grossly under index on strategy and like, actually think about the audience. Like, it's so much easier to test five different DSPs and say you did something that like, you know, think about what you're actually promoting, for example. What do you think about CPM impact? Do you, just speculating on the core channels, you know, Google, Facebook. Do you think that with all this change, do you think you actually will see rates move? That's a hotly debated topic. What's your take on it?

**Jenny Taran 08:23**

So, like, my first gut instinct is to be like, well, CPM's will probably drop a little because there's like, the reason CPMs are so high is because like, we know so much about the user that we're targeting, right. And we're able to then make so many decisions once we get them in and find more users of a cohort that are similar to that. So like, the gut instinct is to say, CPM's are going to drop, but then you also have like, really big advertisers that have probably pretty aggressive targets, across like, globally, you know, like, and that have, like pretty impressive abilities to invest and probably are held to like different targets relative to where they're at and what they're doing that may I think, like, try to take advantage of this space. And so depending on how, like the overarching kind of other advertisers file in you know, I think that that maybe there will be like a steady state, like maybe there'll be a small drop, but then it's steady states out, because I think like, you're still working with brand advertisers, who traditionally, right will be less kind of motivated by those things, and will still just need to spend their brand dollars. There are like very large kind of like developers that could try to like take, take advantage of the space potentially, we'll see about that. Not, not me, because if I just like blindly put money, I'd be fired. But

**Adam Lovallo 09:44**

I think you're right, there's no shortage of multibillion dollar sales of gaming companies to this and that private equity group.

**Jenny Taran 09:52**

Yeah.

**Adam Lovallo 09:52**

Like I have to imagine the intention is to get pretty aggressive post those acquisitions as opposed to like letting these things

**Jenny Taran 10:00**

Yeah, yeah, because it's almost like if, for example, like if I was to think about this clear, like, clearly, especially the spaces where like, niche like performance marketers are really heavy in like those ones. As soon as this launches, everybody's probably gonna, to some degree pull back a little bit to see the, I mean, you can start to see live data now. So we're doing like at Activision, right, we're like doing tests, we're like pulling in a little bit of spend trying to track it see, like, what it looks like. So in beta, right, and so you can see what data is flowing in. But at scale, you like really need some time to broach it. So there's going to be like, a little bit of time before, everybody feels like pretty confident that even like their data, infrastructures are good. And then the other thing is, is like I, you know, like before we, before we went live, we were talking about like the conversion event, and like the intricacies of that. And I think that's another one like that one, you really want to kind of like, flush that out as best as possible. Because like when you're thinking about your one ability to actually optimize, like, that's it. And so the best way that you can think through that, and the best way you think about setting up that event and your strategies, and like the number of campaigns you have per channel and like, are you going to be flipping channels on and off? Or are you going to just have like, minimal partners at certain given times? You know, I think that will be interesting. So I think those, all those will, like definitely create some like, fluxes, but then at the same time, if I had a ton of money, and I was like a little bit less like afraid of consequences, and I saw them CPMs dropping, like anyone does with like the stock market stock market, right? Like I would just like invest a ton in. So then there's probably I'm sure there's going to be like a little bit of like, weird fluctuations happening. So that'll be interesting to see. I think too like something I was thinking too about like recently with like publishers and like traditional networks, which are always like, I think traditional, like already networks have been in like a tough spot. I think we see that like kind of like with app love and like reinventing themselves in a bunch of different ways. Because the traditional network model is just like struggling. So I think it'll be interesting to see like, how to use like, maybe still utilize networks, like recently, I've been thinking about like, kind of turning publishers on and off for certain periods of

time and like using them as like pinpoints of like, okay, right now I want to hit this audience for like, two weeks, and now another audience and other audience and other audience. So I think it'll be, it'll be kind of interesting to see how everybody like creatively works around it. It's, it's like, you know, overarching, like, the whole thing is obviously, like, I guess it's pretty interesting, because interesting is the word I'm using to not say like something terrible.

**Adam Lovallo 12:42**

Yeah, exactly.

**Jenny Taran 12:44**

But I think that it's, it's like everybody kind of hit the steady state of like, oh, I've got this, like, I'm like a pro. I've got like, all the I've got all the tricks and tips. And I'm like, awesome. And so this is funny, because it's just like a complete shake up. And of course, like with iOS happening now, like Android is probably like a year, a year out, you know, so it's just gonna completely shake things up. But.

**Adam Lovallo 13:08**

Yeah, I'll give you a one, the way I think about this from the MAU, you know, high level side is five years ago, you could go to MAU or any event, and you might find a solution provider that you didn't know existed, or, you know, they did something as I Oh, I can, you know, I actually can do deep linking from email, blah blah blah, oh wow. To now a year ago, it's like, anyone who's in this ecosystem, more or less would know, 99% of the key players. Well, whoever they are. Now, it's like, I think some of these companies are gonna get blown up or, you know, they're not networks. They're publishers like what are like, well, we they weren't. But actually they have 50 different features that they offer. It's like a full platform, like, I think it's a reset not quite back to 10 years ago, or whatever, when the App stores open, but certainly, relative to what has been a pretty clear like, you know, you get the channel concentration percentage of spend reports year over year, they haven't really moved. It's like, you know, this network, this network, Facebook, Google, yeah, this network. Okay, I have a, I have a more, again, not so much an Activision question, but like, how closely or where do you think the MMP folks fall? Like, it seems like the initial industry consensus was, well, this could be kind of problematic, but now it's like no, like, they're all flourishing and doing amazing. They've got all these different takes and blog posts and I assume they're talking to all their customers. Like, have you seen that relationship change like, or is it like no, you know, you got an MMP, we're gonna have an MMP to the grave, and they just do lots of different stuff, now. I'm just curious.

**Jenny Taran 14:51**

I mean, I think they're working much harder right now than ever than they have recent. But, yeah, I think that we're gonna have to see I think like, you know, the rewinds on the MMP is like, or any tool set, it's like, can I build this in-house? Or is it too much maintenance, too much work? And it's not sustainable for me to put like that level investment in-house. So I'm going to pay a premium to have it externally. But I don't need to maintain it. And I can focus on my like core business, which I need to, right? So I think the same thing here, as we start to see. And I think like the IDFA, I mean, the like, SK network kind of evolution is going to change too, and what that looks like. So I think like, that's going to really show kind of like where the MMP's are going to fall. I also think like, um, you know, I'm sure they're like, gonna start thinking more seriously about the cost piece, you know, because for so long, like Singular has been kind of like the heavyweight in the past. And I'm sure the MMPs are going to try to like, you know, to my, from my perspective, I don't think they've done a strong enough job on the cost side.

**Adam Lovallo 16:02**

Or like you're saying cost piece, like tying in the spend and visualizing.

**Jenny Taran 16:07**

Yeah.

**Adam Lovallo 16:08**

That was there. Yeah. Like they came at the industry, seemingly from that perspective, and then got tax attribution. Whereas most of the other providers, I guess, brands being one exception coming out the industry from people like liking and getting really started as we are. Yeah, yeah, I think that's right.

**Jenny Taran 16:22**

Which is funny, because now like Singular is really good at cost. And then like the, the attribution partners are really are like, the best of the bunch of at attribution. But neither one, I think, is like that good at the other segment. And so it's also funny, because I keep using my hands, but nobody can see. But I think that like, you know, there's a lot of, like, on the data science part, like either one of those guys can try to come in and like show their strengths in the space and try to find some, like really interesting ways to kind of like model overarching, like data mixes and stuff, and like channel mixes. So I think that is an opportunity. But it's also probably like a huge channel, though, um, or, like, yeah, it's a huge challenge. But they are probably like, all three of those guys, like, I guess, like the main, main ones, like they're really heavily resource, and I'm sure they're throwing everything at like any data science type behavior they can. So I think there is an opportunity for them to kind of come out of this in a way where there'll be like meaningful partners, but actually, it opens up. It kind of like, opens up the ecosystem for anybody else, like really anybody else to step in, and kind of show that they have something significant to add, in terms of tools to help through the scenario.

**Adam Lovallo 17:41**

Yeah, no, I think that like, like, if you think about, like two topics intrinsically linked, incrementality, and media mix modeling, you know, that some company, did this some of them didn't, and whenever, but that was not like a top of the pile list of things that were being a plus in this ecosystem. Now, those are like, I would I guess incrementality is kind of maybe a little bit more difficult, to some extent, but nonetheless, like, those are like the most strategic things you could add value on versus maybe the attribution providers historically being like very much like it's like a tactical way to measure the click, and then it fingerprints. Yeah, like very clear what the solution was, but not not a really strategic contribution, just like a prerequisite. Exactly this create room for strategy where maybe there wasn't before? Okay. All right. So we've hit the IDFA stuff. So now in my remaining time, I want to talk about the international side of, of what you've done both here and in prior roles. So like, to what extent are you you know, you're operating across all these countries. Is everything first of all localized? I mean, in terms of language, but also, you know, do you have different events or content? Like is there any, like cultural side of it beyond just the localization? Or I mean, I suppose it's possible you run many countries English language, and just say, you know, screw it. So what's that? How does that mix? How is that compared in your different roles, different companies?

**Jenny Taran 19:18**

So so like, for this for, for Call of Duty mobile, this is like that, the most international I think of a product I've ever worked on, and when we from both product and from like, kind of marketing, we really think we try, we try our best to think about kind of approaching the world in the way that feels natural and each of like the markets. And so I think it's super important. I think it creates like a super positive kind of like user, user product relationship, because it shows a level of investment. And so I think in any part of life, anything you do, whether you're buying something, whether you're working somewhere like that, thing you want to feel is that what you're investing in is investing back. So Call of Duty mobile players play like a huge amount of time. And they buy into the game, even though it doesn't like help progress them. And so what they want back is to see that the game is investing back in them. And they think like, localization is important. And we localize in a bunch of languages across, across the world. But the regionalization, I think, is also really important. And that's something we've started to dabble in and started to, kind of, like, try to do a bit of, and

we have been since actually the launch of the game. And then as we expand our team, like over the next kind of few years, that's a place where we're going to continue to grow and invest in in thinking about how do we expand so that we can properly facilitate a nice experience for users wherever they are, and they feel like that we're creating content custom to them. So there is

**Adam Lovallo 20:50**

In your world. regionalization is like, a, you have the special weekend game thing that is for people in whatever we like that sort of thing, not purely, like literally having it be in the right language.

**Jenny Taran 21:05**

Yeah, yeah. And so and I think that's like a big distinction, because like localization, and like good, and like, that's, that's kind of like a bare minimum, right. So someone can clearly understand what's happening in the game. But then, like, creating content or experiences that are for that region, I think that's important, like with our competitive initiatives, we have kind of like a global presence. And so that's kind of the beginning of that in the regions, we've also created content in certain regions, like specifically for those regions. And the content, like could be appealing to anybody worldwide. But when we think about that content, we're thinking about it from that region. So you know, like, with the Chinese New Year, we create content with Carnival, we create content. And then actually, last year, we did like kind of a promotion with Bish, and which is like a pop group in Japan. And that basically, we only promoted it in game in Japan. And we created like, specific content for it that was primarily in Japan at the time, and doesn't mean in the future, we won't create things that start in a region and go globally. But um, I think it is, like pretty cool to create things where you know, like, within that space, it's going to be really appreciated and really garner like, excited for users.

**Adam Lovallo 22:21**

No, it's awesome. And what if you take a step back and build that on Call of Duty, but but even you know, you have lots of, lots of competitors. I assume all of the marketing, all of the user acquisition stuff, is it, is that fully localized? Or is there? Is there any regionalization of that? Or, I mean, are you running more or less the same assets that you hand off to network x, but you know, you change up the languages and keep it moving? Or have you, is there that level of specificity.

**Jenny Taran 22:52**

So we're, we're going towards the specificity, and we've done some of it, but not not everywhere, like and not always is the thing. Like, for example, we had kind of like we for every season, we create, like trailers that essentially launch the season, also living game kind of give a good overview of what's coming. And in Japan, like traditionally, like that kind of experience wouldn't, wouldn't be the best performing asset. But we have seen that they're in like certain cases, and depends on the content, like it does overlap, and it does work. At the same time, we are creating content in Japan, like using Japanese creative shops, and that content is completely localized and regionalized. And we actually don't run it anywhere else globally. So maybe we should just turn on Japan, and worldwide on some campaigns and run some pieces that way. But just maybe that'd be a good idea.

**Adam Lovallo 23:49**

It sounds like something for the future. Um, all right. Well, I think I don't want to take too much time. This is perfect. If somebody wanted to find you, do you post to do Twitter or LinkedIn posts or whatever or not really, are you not not?

**Jenny Taran 24:08**

I have. I think I have a Twitter that I don't really, I haven't really used and I have a LinkedIn. LinkedIn is like probably right now the space but I probably should, should create like a better a better form of messaging because messaging because my LinkedIn isn't in dire straits.

**Adam Lovallo 24:26**

Perhaps this will be the inspiration you need. Alright, well, thank you. And I, I hope, maybe this calendar year, as we are planning or maybe in sometime in the future, there might be an opportunity for those of us in this ecosystem to like, be in a room together. Look forward to that.

**Jenny Taran 24:45**

Yeah. I miss it.

**Adam Lovallo 24:47**

I appreciate it. I appreciate your time.

**Jenny Taran 24:50**

Thanks a lot for having me and look out for my future web presence that I'll be a developing post recovering of my ACL.

**Adam Lovallo 25:01**

Thank you.

**MAU[Talk] 25:04**

Thanks for joining us. You can find Jenny's contact information in this podcast description or at [mauvegas.com](http://mauvegas.com) Make sure to subscribe wherever you get your podcasts to catch on the next episode of MAU [Talk].