



BY HANNAH MIRZA, GLOBAL HEAD OF PARTNERSHIPS, MEDIACOM 29 JUN 2016

Demand for tailored digital content and advances in technology are paving the way toward automated creative. Just how fast we can travel down that road remains a question mark.

In the early days of internet advertising, the web was littered with the worst kind of banner creative. Fake Microsoft windows error messages and flashing neon signs beckoning users to click here, buy now and sign up were ubiquitous. Ads were even color-matched to the sites on which they were placed, tricking consumers into interactions.

While we've certainly come a long way since then, the demise of flash banners and the rise of native formats (coupled with demand for more video placements) have created dual conflicts. First, more publishers are requiring creative that is custom-built for their platforms,

thereby increasing production costs. Second, many advertisers are still pushing TV ads to digital channels and expecting them to work just as they do offline.

For traditional creative agencies, banners and buttons were guilty of watering down their big ideas. Though better than static print, dimension limitations and file-size constraints often meant sacrificing aesthetics. For passionate creatives, it was soul-sapping work.

Flash and the subsequent introduction of HTML5 have provided some relief; at least the push to standardize formats meant having to whip up only a few sets of banners for rotation across all media placements. These could be combined with a handful of bespoke big-money homepage takeovers and dynamic creative executions for added impact.

Harnessing the benefits of digital

Flash forward several years, and we now find that the pendulum may have swung too far in the opposite direction. Publishers are demanding bespoke creative, because they know their own futures rely on keeping visitors happy and hooked. And across the street, large suppliers like Google, Facebook and Twitter are pushing back on the use of TV commercials for similar reasons. While these big players are also thinking about their own payment models, it all comes down to the same thing: social platforms want attention-grabbing, platform-specific ad units.

Meanwhile, clients' content production budgets are sucked dry.

The new role of technology

It's no surprise, then, that an alternative production solution is evolving to solve these mutual challenges: multi-variant, low-cost, customized production at scale. This is great news for clients, who will theoretically enjoy lower costs and improved performance.

There are several solutions and suppliers to consider, all of which create different production efficiencies based on your needs and objectives:

- Production of non-professional, user-generated creative at scale: Olapic,

Candid, Chute and Percolate.

- Production of professionally-generated creative at scale and at a lower cost: Talenthouse, Vidsy, ReFUEL4 and Genero.
- Production of multi-variant personalized creative using data overlays: Jivox, Persado, Sizmek and Mixpo.

And lastly, we may ultimately look to computational creativity and AI to deliver work that dynamically adapts to user interaction when set against the brand's objectives. Creativity may well be the last advantage that man has over machine, but it's territory that is being actively explored by entrepreneurial minds all over the world.

The route to best in class advertising

Technologically-enabled creative production is already a reality, and new models and suppliers will continue to emerge. They have to: aside from platforms that insist on custom creative, some have no choice but to say "build it or forget it" to marketers. Spending time reviewing Snapchat advertisements – which must be built specifically for the app – are a case in point.

Brands need to figure out how important bespoke creative really is in an overall plan built to achieve specific objectives. At MediaCom, we are constantly assessing our clients' investments in creative production to ensure that their spend levels (and platform choices) are optimized and working as they should. Advertisers should be looking at their levels of creative spending in relationship to performance, and begin assessing how that synergy could change once production costs begin to drop. In a world of technology-driven creative development, customization, relevance, timeliness and performance all improve... and that would make everyone happy.

CONTENT