

The Future of Programmatic Content

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The programmatic revolution reminds me of the mail industry. While the days of the pony express are far behind us, today's post office still focuses on the same thing: get the message delivered. When it arrives, we are happy to find a gift and annoyed to confront a bill. In other words, the way we get the message is secondary to what's in it.

Likewise, programmatic enables a terrific level of targeting, but targeting isn't worth very much if the content you're delivering isn't telling the right story... and we already know that an overreliance on technology and data never resulted in a fantastic story.

What are the chances that Cadbury's had the data to prove that a drumming gorilla would put a TVC into the running for "[best advertisement of all time](#)?" The answer is zero, and I'm sure they were not targeting people with a history of looking at gorilla content. It's a fact that some of the world's greatest advertising campaigns were built on ideas, not data.

For me, though, it's not about one vs. the other: it's about putting them together to deliver "programmatic content." In its most realized form, this would mean showing each individual in the world the exact branded content that interests him or her, in precisely the right form and channel, in the most cost-effective way possible.

How far are we from this blissful state of affairs? It's not right around the corner, to be honest, but each of us has an innate understanding of the concept. Think about the last conversation you had with a friend. Did you talk about things in which each of you have an interest? Did you adjust your questions and answers to reflect the real-time direction of the discussion? Was it a text, phone call, email or snap? This is the most basic form of programmatic content: making a personal connection by way of the right content, form, channel and price. It is all too easy to forget about the idea and human engagement when you're looking at a dashboard full of CPCs, impressions and conversions.

We are only at the tip of the programmatic iceberg, and there's no end to the possibilities that a programmatic mindset may bring. This is particularly true when it's not only about how and when the message is delivered, but also about customizing the message itself. In the end – whether it's a drumming gorilla on TV, on YouTube or on Facebook – it's still about the gorilla.

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