

Can Blockchain Spur an Advertising Revolution?

INSIGHT THOUGHT LEADERSHIP

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Though few understand its intricacies, there is the capability to flip the systems Amazon, Facebook and Google all have in place.

Let's start with a couple definitions. Blockchain is a technology that enables an anonymous, decentralized record of transactions. Imagine a public chain of information in which each link is a single transaction, viewable by all but impossible to change once it has been formed. And keep in mind, [Blockchain](#) is not Bitcoin. Bitcoin is built on blockchain technology, but cryptocurrency is just the beginning.

Consider three circumstances that businesspeople frequently encounter: transactions that require anonymity, contracts that are difficult to enforce and parties that don't know or may not trust each other. [Blockchain](#) can address these in a way that was impossible. Until now.

So why should you care?

Because blockchain has the power to address some of ad tech's most pressing challenges. Today's [digital ad industry](#) revolves around Google, Facebook and Amazon. All have built walled gardens that hold cross-device data, media inventory and creative formats that work exclusively on their own platforms. Like Comcast, Turner and Viacom, it's media protecting audiences and dollars at the expense of advertisers that pay too much to deliver too many impressions to consumers who are sick of getting so many ads.

Blockchain will upend this broken equation. For the walled gardens, there are not enough reasons (or incentives) for Amazon, Google, Facebook, Turner and Comcast to work together and trust one another. As a result, media agencies must use third-party tools to plan overlap and [make assumptions](#) about how to achieve optimal levels of reach and frequency across digital and traditional advertising channels.

Blockchain will solve the need for anonymity and trust by producing accurate, real-time information about the content people consume, the ads they receive and how they move across platforms without costly, assumptive data-sharing contracts that are costly to enforce. In other words, blockchain offers no alternative and nowhere to hide.

In order to truly deliver the right ad to the right people at the right time, advertisers and planners would need to see consumers travel and behave across media platforms. Blockchain is literally the chain of anonymous transactional information that will go up and over the walls and link the gardens together. It will enable the [advertising industry to cut waste](#), target the right people, reduce the advertising load and deliver fewer, more timely and more relevant ads (not interruptive noise). We'll be able to anonymously track a customer across platforms and therefore deliver personalized ads without any personally identifiable information or costly contracts across media empires.

Why will the walled gardens play along, you ask?

Because we'll make them, but also because it's in their best interest to finally gain access to TV budgets. While it will be a challenge to get walled gardens to implement the code enabling blockchain, such an ask is not without precedent. It's similar to how our industry has addressed viewability and brand safety. We tested technologies, settled on the best as an industry and now implement a set of tools across all channels for a consistent, third-party view. It took some time, but all the walled gardens now accept viewability and brand safety tags. They will accept the universal audience tags required by blockchain as well.

Plus, this isn't a one-sided benefit. TV's reach and frequency currently guard the U.S. \$75 billion-plus TV ad market. Universal audience management will enable the new walled gardens to match the breakthrough power of TV by assembling pieces across the fractured marketplace into media buys that match the weight of TV with the targeting and accountability of digital.

Right now all of this is still hard to imagine, almost like trying to describe Facebook to [someone in 1994](#). But we'll get there soon enough.

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