

No more, no less: Target as you like to be targeted

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That's the balance digital dices with constantly - so how do you effectively target and deliver positive experiences then get results online? Britt Cushing, Senior Partner, MediaCom Chicago, participated in a Campaign hosted roundtable to discuss this and more...

“Talking about people that don’t want to be advertised to is an oxymoron. I was exposed to so many ads this morning – on the radio, billboards. Everyone is going to be difficult, you’ve got to cut through it, in the right way.”

Andrew Goode is the EVP, General Manager, North America at Affiperf and was speaking at a candid roundtable discussion in Chicago, one of two events set to explore digital’s

future.

How to target audiences effectively and overcome the threats facing digital marketing today underpinned a debate among media agencies and brands, hosted by Campaign and GumGum.

How do the ad experts like to be targeted?

Campaign US editor Lindsay Stein asked participants how they like or dislike being targeted... as consumers. Conagra Senior Brand Communications Director Lanie Friedman explained she is curious about ads but dislikes that the same ads target her, even though she isn't engaging them at all.

"There's a 50 percent chance I'll click, but there's one company now that targets me every day and I find it annoying that they won't abandon me, even though I'm not interested. I wonder how much money they waste targeting disengaged people like me. Having a negative brand experience with an ad makes you never want to engage with them," she said.

Some identified Facebook and Instagram as the best way to target but raised concerns that ads were taking over their social feeds.

"I'm a big online shopper, but most of my feeds are ads. I have to refollow friends to make sure I'm seeing their content," explained Initiative Chief Digital Officer Beth Mach.

Is over targeting leading to unrealistic goals and media waste?

"One of the biggest challenges is knowing where the data comes from that allows us to target people – and how accurate that data is," said Britt Cushing, senior partner at MediaCom. "In actuality, how you use data to target someone isn't always accurate."

Friedman explained that IP addresses and search often lead to inaccurate targeting:

“Sometimes people searching are not honest, so you end up targeting people with things they don’t really need. I used to work at an agency on a baby brand so would search baby-related content all the time, so I would get served targeted ads on that. It’s a waste.”

TEC Direct President Charles Fetterly believes we suffer from “over-targeting.”

“Just because we can target a certain way doesn’t mean we necessarily should,” said Fetterly.

The industry is caught up with striving for perfection, which is an “unattainable goal,” according to Harvin Furman, SVP at Starcom.

“The challenge is we’re spending so much time justifying why it’s not perfect, instead of talking about why it’s pretty damn good. We need to manage expectations better,” he said.

Focus on what really matters: value

“We think about about non-precise advertising waste a lot, but we should be focusing on value. We’ve lost touch of the value of incidental advertising,” continued Furman.

Goode agreed that there is a focus on measuring a click or acquisition on digital, because we can – even though it isn’t a possibility on other channels, such as TV, radio or billboards: “We ignore the whole halo effect of presence in digital advertising. There’s also something to be said about using human understanding and instinct on what feels good.”

Friedman explained that value for Conagra, a packaged-food business, for instance, is bringing in a new consumer every day. It’s not about retargeting the loyalists – but targeting

relevant people and new audiences.

Value might be making sure your target audience knows about your brand and is aware. “If they are aware, and show they care, show them a little more, and keep building,” said Terrance Nixon, digital media supervisor at Publicis.Sapient. “Then understand who the people are that are uninterested – and explore why.”

One way to tell good stories is to join up the context, creative and target audience.

“Context, content and targeting are considered in silos and it needs to change,” said Kerry Hemmerich, EVP at Spark.

Lisa Evia, president, media at Havas said there is some “lazy contextual” happening: “We need to be creative and think what is the context of the audience you’re targeting.”

“Sometimes clients are afraid to create content that’s specific to a certain context so use the same creative everywhere – because it’s expensive or takes longer to vary,” added Paige Elrod, digital media supervisor at Marc USA.

Mach highlighted the imperative to have honest and realistic conversations with the client about the truth: “We need to speak with the client and creative teams altogether. A lot of the time there’s a wall and we’re ignored but we need to push ourselves into those conversations.”

“Context and creative can’t be separate,” added Friedman, while Cushing went further suggesting context in the brief should be mandatory. To that end, Furman suggested that GDPR “may be be one of the best things that happened”.

“There’s going to be winners and losers, but it’s going to force a conversation on how to make advertising more effective and creating an experience that aligns better,” added Furman.

How AI can help

Phil Schraeder, president and COO at GumGum explained that the pendulum is swinging from one end to the other with targeting, and they are trying to find a happy medium.

“It’s understanding more contextually and about integrating your brand seamlessly. How can a brand pop up in an image or a video without being so intrusive? That’s what we’re solving,” he said.

GumGum has a flavor of contextual targeting known as augmented advertising – content that augments a creative, as opposed to advertising that augments the content. It helps to not only deliver better, contextually relevant experiences, but also brand safe ones explained Schraeder.

“Most brand safety solutions rely on text analysis which doesn’t provide enough information on the content of a page. AI-powered computer vision uses neural networks to screen millions of images for triggers,” he said.

Three ways to progress

1. Have honest conversations with clients
2. Start with a good story
3. Focus on value, not convenience

“We train our people to communicate the issues, opportunities and what they mean to clients on a daily basis. This is key to progressing,” explained Mach. “We talk a lot about how to move forward but we haven’t trained our people to speak in a certain way and formulate what that means to a client.”

Hemmerich said we need to “push further than the easy things to measure”.

Overall, Furman believes that the winners in this space will be the storytellers: “We created an entire generation of media professionals who forgot how to story tell. How do we start going back to that as those skills are very valuable.

[Original article written by Georganna Simpson, June 13, 2018.](#)

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