

COLUMNS

Circle of advertising life

May 3, 2016



Harry Robinson is vice president of product marketing at Celtra

By **Harry Robinson**

Subscribe to **Luxury Daily**
Plus: Just released
State of Luxury 2019 **Save \$246 ▶**

As the dust settles following the ad blocking frenzy of late last year, we can begin to see the extent of the impact.

Without a doubt, the ad industry loves to sensationalize events such as this. Some of the headlines I recall reading touted terms such as "the apocalypse" and "the end." For a brief moment, it felt as if it was cool to write like the end of advertising was upon us. Such faith we had in our own industry.

Of course, for some publishers it has had an immediate, but hopefully temporary, impact on the profitability of their ad business.

But for the wider industry, the impact has been negligible. Advertisers continue to advertise and consumers continue to receive ads.

The circle of advertising life marches on.

Holy wail

In the aftermath, I believe that the consensus would say that the cause of all this is poor ad user experience.

More specifically, when we recently surveyed more than 300 media professionals at the end of 2015, we saw that lack of creative relevancy was the main cause of poor user experience slightly above issues such as ad design, quality and presentation.

If we are honest, we in the advertising industry knew that the display advertising experience was inadequate almost inappropriate and that ad revenue was being put before user experience and suitability.

Most 84 percent from our study already acknowledged that their creatives could be improved and made more relevant.

"But how did we let this happen?" is a question that I often get asked.

Hundreds of millions of dollars, hours of time, and years of development by very smart people have been spent on developing targeting and identification capabilities like never before.

You can now advertise to someone as they walk past your shop, buying that impression in real time, only if they meet the very specific demographic criteria for which you are looking.

The Holy Grail of one-to-one advertising is here, so why are users still getting pissed off? Why are ads still not

relevant? Perhaps it has something to do with the relationship between creative conceptualization and media planning?

Let us start from the beginning.

One percenters

Brand wants to advertise a new product or service. It briefs the creative and media agencies that often independently, create creative concepts and media plans that they believe are right for the desired audience. Media plans are usually crafted from a wealth of data and information about that target user.

The creative, on the other hand, is more artistic, often the brainchild of an experienced art director.

At the last minute, usually the campaign's launch, the media plan and creative meet for the first time and the campaign goes live.

From this point on, and often very quickly, the media plan goes straight out of the window.

On average, in display advertising, only around 1 percent of viewers will engage with your creative and the obsession media agencies, publishers and brands have around this 1 percent is amazing.

Very quickly the media agency rallies around this single 1 percent, moving budgets and changing placements to grow this 1 percent. Then, analytics are provided to determine if they are engaging further, how they are engaging and for how long.

There are two significant issues with this.

1. What if the creative design has caused engagement from the wrong 1 percent?
2. What about the other 99 percent that didn't engage?

By focusing on the 1 percent, and iterating and iterating around the media plan, we may end up with a media plan that fits the creative, not a creative that fits the media plan.

This is the opposite of what should be happening, not to mention expensive, as you begin to increase the media price and narrow your reach.

Remember, the media plan was built around past and existing data forming the most accurate part of the campaign. Unfortunately, rarely do we optimize creative in the same scientific manner.

And what about the 99 percent that did not engage? What was their experience? What was their impression of your brand?

ARE WE beginning to realize that we have reached a glass ceiling when it comes to gains that can be made through media targeting and optimization?

For me, until creative becomes more dynamic, more contextually responsive and more relevant, we will continue to have broadcast-style messaging being used across one-to-one media planning.

More frustratingly, we will continue to talk about ad blocking.

Harry Robinson is vice president of product marketing at [Celtra](#), New York. Reach him at harry@celtra.com.