

WHY NOW? TURNER STRESSES TO INDUSTRY: CHANGE NOW OR GET LEFT BEHIND

By Donna Speciale, President, Turner Ad Sales.
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Credit: iStock

The \$68 billion TV ad marketplace is on the cusp of upending traditional buying. For decades, TV networks promised mass delivery of ad messages based on age/sex demographics. Now, in just a short number of years that system is getting tipped on its antennae with revolutionary advances in data and insights previously available only on digital. With a limited number of media companies, marketers can now access both broad reach and more precise messaging based on audience segments.

Take Turner, for instance, a media company that boldly stated two years ago that by 2020, more than half of its inventory would be sold based on non-traditional guarantees. For most, it would seem a long way to go for an organization built on conventional media buys, but this is the same company that has made recent headlines with reimagined TV and ad formats. It was the first to announce commercial time reduction, cutting ad time in half on truTV and TNT; made significant investments in storytelling capabilities through its Courageous brand studio; and formed consortiums like The Turner Client Council and Turner AdLab, to gather thought leaders across different disciplines, with the goal of addressing today's needs with progressive testing and innovation for the future.

But the biggest story of the year came when Turner, together with Fox and Viacom, announced OpenAP, an advanced audience platform that brings a digital buying

mindset to television. Its goal is to simplify audience buying for brands, while utilizing a third-party auditor in Accenture.

Earlier this month, OpenAP officially opened for business after beta tests with clients in New York and Los Angeles. For Turner, this launch was the culmination of years of work in advanced advertising and further positioned the company as a leader determined to drive strong outcomes for brands.

Here, Donna Speciale, president of Turner Ad Sales, shares what this all means for the future of advertising and how this plays into the company's mantra to ensure everything done at Turner drives outcomes for advertisers.

Q: Turner has already had an impact on TV buying norms—from introducing limited ad loads, to experimenting with native content and building out content studios. You have also made bold moves on audience buying, and went so far two years ago as predicting more than half of your inventory would be sold through nontraditional means by 2020. Is that the future of TV ad buying?

A: All the initiatives that you mentioned are interrelated. Without content, the data and insights don't matter, and if you aren't reaching the right person, that powerful creative you invested in doesn't matter, either. Audience targeting will never be 100% of a plan, but it's a critical part of any

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media mix and plays a vital role in the future of advertising. When combining audience targeting with the passion of the fans across our portfolio, advertisers experience powerful ROI.

Q: Earlier this month, Procter & Gamble's Marc Pritchard spoke at the ANA Masters of Marketing conference about the importance of one-to-one marketing, at scale. If this topic is resonating with marketers, why are some hesitant to come on board with audience buying?

A: The why is complex. It's having more leaders like Marc step forward and push for this level of connection and innovation. And the marketers need to prepare by deepening their understanding of their own target segments, building out the right systems to inform these types of buys, and providing agencies the greenlight to make it happen. At Turner, we need to share more of the ROI wins to better educate the community. We already transformed our entire framework. The people, technology and the systems needed to be overhauled. We invested in that process and have seen huge amounts of value. And through it all, we've learned through testing and have since simplified the process for our partners.

Q: Was that the goal of OpenAP—to simplify audience targeting?

A: Yes. The clients asked us to come together. They needed it to be scalable. We can't revolutionize advertising if we are all working in silos. We needed partners like Fox and Viacom to raise their hands and understand that when this is successful, we and our partners win. Television is a platform—we all own just a piece of it. And it doesn't stop here. Client input will continue to inform our capabilities and decision-making. It is crucial in the evolution of platforms like OpenAP.

Q: How are you working with marketers to better educate them on the ROI wins, so they better understand the value?

A: Dialogue and sharing case studies is critical. Fortunately, we have a long-standing relationship with many agencies and brands, so the trust has been built. You mentioned the ANA earlier. Bob Liodice, CEO of the Association of National Advertisers, stated this month ... "great marketing isn't great, unless it's validated by super results." We couldn't agree more. There is a lot of noise across our industry about ad capabilities and solutions, but when you narrow it down to companies fueling results, there are only a handful delivering for advertisers. We need to continue to share that story. For us, the good news is every client that has worked with Turner on audience-based deals over the last few years has renewed, and done so with increased spend. We aren't in testing mode anymore. Brands are seeing powerful ROI from these deals. As more clients test, learn and return, and the stories are shared, there will be greater adoption across the industry.

Q: How do these ad formats and targeting capabilities play into the viewer, or in many instances, a fan experience?

A: If we do this right, that fan enjoying his or her favorite show will have an optimal experience. Our mission is to feature advertising that is wanted and welcomed. It should complement an overall experience regardless of platform on which that show is being viewed. Good advertising is culture, it's trends, it's knowing about new product launches. Individuals want to know what is happening. It's all a matter of how we are telling those stories and if it is getting to the right people. When we feature a premium environment, engage the right audience and share advertising that stirs emotion and engagement, we all win.

Turner Delivers for Partners:

25% average lift across hundreds of audience targeting deals

3.5x more attention to native content spots vs. regular commercials

1/2 billion social views delivered for the hundreds of partners that used Launchpad, Turner's optimization capability for the social distribution of branded content campaigns

Q: Is that the future—a world where advertising is desired?

A: Absolutely. Everything that we are doing now is enabling us to innovate for tomorrow. We need to walk before we can run. Just like it's important to invest in the content, it's critical we continue to invest in capabilities like audience segment

buying. It is the first step to making TV advertising a truly addressable, one-to-one platform. Much like marketers needed to experiment early with digital buying, they now need to start experimenting with TV audience buying if the industry is ever going to successfully move to addressable. Audience buying is the on-ramp for forming the one-to-one connections that Marc spoke about.

ABOUT ignite

Turner Ignite is focused on reimagining advertising. Powered by unrivaled branded content services, data-rich ad targeting capabilities, first-of-its kind social optimization tools and global distribution, Turner Ignite empowers brands to build more meaningful connections with consumers and drive return on investment at scale. The business unit is backed by Turner's wide-scale audience of diverse fans within its portfolio properties, including leading media brands Adult Swim, Boomerang, Cartoon Network, CNN, Great Big Story, HLN, SuperDeluxe, TBS, TNT, truTV, Bleacher Report and Turner Sports' high-profile coverage of the NBA, Major League Baseball, NCAA Division I Men's Basketball Championship, ELEGUE, UEFA and professional golf. In addition, the company has digital sales partnerships with the NBA, NCAA and PGA.