Today’s AD Team

Audience Development represents the information consumer and supports the businesses with analytics and insights about product engagement and usage with a growing emphasis on digital products and services.

The AD team represents the voice of the audience and can deliver data not just on the “what,” but also the “why,” the “when” and the “what if” for true decision support. Audience Development can offer strategic and valuable contributions to digital strategy, but in many companies is often left out of key discussions until late in the project cycle.

Understanding corporate goals, market challenges, emerging trends, and audience engagement is critical to successful collaboration and ultimately represents AD’s contribution to the digital media product lifecycle. The more often the AD team is involved in the early stages of planning, the more relevant their contribution will be as they work in step with the digital development process, sales challenges and product goals.

Strategic Collaboration between AD and the Digital Team

AD can provide critical insights and guidance on best practices when planning new or iterating or redesigning digital products - from full website redesigns/relaunches to e-Newsletters, niche sites, mobile apps, et al. AD can also make meaningful contributions to discussions on new products, untapped markets, and strategic partnerships.

1. Insights and perspectives on user behavior from AD can be useful in planning a site launch or relaunch:
   • Traffic Flow Insights — how traffic flows from one page to another page on your web site, providing trending data for all department silos.
   • Engagement Analytics — transaction and interaction analytics for a complete overview of the customer interaction with your brands. This allows audience development, sales, marketing and editorial to analyze actionable and identifiable data across all media channels coupled with real-time analytics. Better data intelligence allows all department silos to act on real-time behavioral and engagement data.
   • Social, mobile and digital engagement data to understand the consumer and the money trail.
   • Research – user information needs/habits.
   • Comparisons of subscriber vs non-subscriber behavior.
   • Usability regarding which types of buttons work best, how using accent colors can help guide the audience through a page – usability studies, etc.
   • Definition of goals with measurable elements and KPI benchmarks before and after launch: time spent #of pages, #of unique users, bounces, traffic sources, etc.
   • Using/developing persona profiles to delve deeper into user behavior, understanding that not everyone is the same. It's not just about how many; it's the “who” and what they need, what they are engaging with, and what they're doing.
2. Best Practices on social, SEO and promotion:
   • Guidance and best practices for social media integration.
   • Inbound Marketing - why and how content marketing can be utilized effectively.
   • SEO best practices & reviews.
   • Gating/Registration Strategies – turning unknown UVs into known customers.
   • Recommendation on design and placement opportunities specifically for audience development, as recognition of online users is critical for acquisition programs as part of the overall product plan and brand strategy.

3. Identifying the market for new products and client satisfaction:
   • Digital/Print/Event overlap analysis and strategic recommendations.
   • Demonstrating to a client that buying a longer program is more effective; i.e. a 4-week program will reach ‘50%’ of the audience while a 1-week program will reach 25% of the audience.
   • Showing that a targeted communication program that spans multiple weeks with subject line and creative testing is much more effective than running a one-time email blast (internal and external clients).
   • Deep analysis of audience profiles and product usage to uncover new opportunities that are targeted to the most desired personas and their needs
     • Perhaps there is a segment of the print audience that doesn't engage with digital, and we uncover the fact they are mostly within a certain industry or certain type of job function/title. Is there a digital product that would make sense for this segment? Is there an opportunity to expand editorial coverage, etc.?
     • What are the overriding characteristics of the audience segment that engage with products more than 3x a week? Can we find enough look-alikes to market our products to or possibly launch a membership program to attract?
   • Ensure concept viability based on audience research.
   • Pricing model strategy/research.
   • Identify ways/thoughts/approaches to merge objective and subjective data that can aid in understanding and telling the “story.”

4. Ensure the success of integrated programs, marketing solutions/custom media programs and event sponsorships/partnerships:
   • Develop communication plans and traffic-driving strategies to meet client expectations.
   • Set standards and realistic targets for client reporting and KPI definitions.
   • Develop Social media, email, A/B testing of different strategies in conjunction with the client’s promotional strategy.
Case Study: Watt Global Media Trending Topics Newsletter

Watt Global Media wanted to increase website traffic and engagement for its Pet Food Industry website. E-mail newsletters are a huge traffic driver for the site and the brand’s newsletters had previously been created in the traditional way—by editors selecting and distributing.

To help boost traffic, Watt’s audience development team created a new newsletter that could be owned by both the audience and marketing teams. Called “Trending Topics,” the new newsletter is a weekly roundup of the top PetFoodIndustry.com content that is sent on Saturdays. Content is populated by RSS feeds, so there is no need for additional content resources. The newsletter is mobile-friendly—about 52 percent of Trending Topics opens come from mobile devices.

Watt’s audience development team tested sending the newsletter on both Saturday and Sunday and opted to go with Saturday mornings. “It was closest to the previous week, not much difference between the open rates,” says Julia Caruso, research and database analyst for Watt Global Media. “The consensus is the weekend newsletters generate lower volume, but higher engagement—sometimes higher than during the week.”

Watt split distribution to its Pet Food database in three ways—subscribers to the existing newsletter, website registrants and everyone else. “The idea behind it was to see how each group engaged with the new product,” says Caruso.

While re-sending previously distributed content was a gamble, Trending Topics has been hugely effective for PetFoodIndustry.com, doubling the number of sessions from newsletters (about 25,000 additional sessions).

Based on the success of Trending Topics, Watt launched a second RSS feed newsletter called Market Focus that’s more of a topic newsletter that is owned by content team, which has boosted newsletter sessions by another 50 percent.

Using repurposed content, these newsletters have,

• Tripled website sessions from newsletters
• Provide another opportunity for audience engagement
• Repurposed content offers other opt. for audience to engage—open rates were the same, and highest response came from people already getting the initial newsletter
• Provides new testing opportunities
• Requires little additional work with minimal impact on workflow
• Offer new sponsorship opportunities
Tools and Technology To Enhance AD/Digital Efforts and Create Transparency (one set of agreed upon numbers)

Technologies that serve Audience Development will continue to evolve in complexity and importance as more data, intelligence and insight becomes available. The changes are rapid-fire and AD and digital/tech teams must collaborate to keep up.

Technology teams and AD should work together to vet tools for AD that serve the needs of both teams and the organization as a whole. Some software provides critical data for ensuring best performance while others can help reduce or replace the need to request changes from the development team (for minor tweaks).

Types of vendors and technologies to consider investigating, implementing or training AD team members on are:

- E-mail deployment systems – what data is available to AD?
- Social Media
  - not just how many but who are they.
  - social listening- monitoring content sharing, postings, commentary
- Database Management Platform – Marketing Automation Platforms
- Business Intelligence & Dashboards
- Page Building – landing page development, email template changes, personalization
- Usability Testing – heat maps, etc.
- Analytics – across all platforms
  - Engagement Metrics - email engagement, social engagement, social sentiment, product engagement, etc.

Case Study: Onsite Conversion and Engagement Tools

In past two years, Northstar Travel Group had redesigned all of their brand websites which increased site traffic. Now the company is ready to dig deeper to gain a better understanding of on-page conversion and engagement. In 2016, Northstar Travel Media is testing three new tools to drive onsite conversion and engagement, including,

- **CrazyEgg**: Uses heat maps to provide engagement insights for specific sections of websites and scrolling reports to track traffic from referrals (social media, Google, etc.). Referencing the heat map and scroll map allows the publishers to make small incremental changes that drive results and avoid major website redesigns.

- **OptinMonster**: Drag & drop form build with exit intent technology that monitors mouse movements, detecting when a user is about to leave a site and allowing you to covert users before they leave.

- **Ion Interactive**: A web-based content marketing platform that allows you to test and measure all types of interactive content.
Audience Development and the Evolution of Traditional Marketing

In some companies, AD still needs to focus on the traditional “circulation” standards (closing issues, filing statements, passing audits), which includes methods and practices that are very different from digital products.

AD can help bridge the gap between the “new school and old school” which can particular benefit the digital team. There is a need for both methods of thinking and resulting different approaches and thought processes within the more traditional B2B organization (where standard print practices are still significant from a time and revenue standpoint). The need to focus on behaviors/engagement differs by product; in print, insights are usually found through syndicated research studies (Readex, MRI etc.), while in digital, the data is real-time and can be analyzed at any time, so consistent/ongoing analysis is required.

Case Study: SourceMedia Bounce Exchange

SourceMedia’s flagship brand, American Banker, features a tiered website with both freely available content as well as subscription-only content. To boost subscriptions and free trial registrations as well as upsell other paid products such as research reports, the SourceMedia audience development team launched Bounce Exchange, a pop-up promotion effort.

Bounce Exchange places pop-ups that can be triggered by different tags—from entrance to the homepage to reading certain articles. If an article is related to another product, Source can offer a promotion to that reader. Source also runs pop-ups for free trial subscriptions. To boost conversions, SourceMedia went from a one-page registration form to a progressive registration template that asks for less information in more bit-sized chunks.

The effort has doubled both subscription trials and the conversion rate on a monthly basis and SourceMedia is now extending Bounce Exchange to four additional websites.

AD/Digital Checklist & Next Steps:

1. Ask AD anything! If they don’t know, they will find out.
2. Include AD in strategy meetings from the outset.
3. Review current projects in development (new product ideas, existing upgrades, etc.).
4. Agree on immediate, mid and long term AD goals.
5. Set/agree on ongoing communication plan.
6. Set/agree on a formal schedule to review AD goals.
7. AD team - reach out to the digital team as needed, with the understanding schedules are tight and hallway conversations may not always be welcome.