



Integration - What, Why and How?

By Connie Burtcheard

According to The American Heritage Dictionary of the English Language, Integration is the process of:

- Making into a whole by bringing all parts together; unify.
- Joining with something else; uniting: Making part of a larger unit:

So, what impact does integration have on the Media Industry?

Is integration simply the thought of fusing traditional media planners and interactive planners into an aggregate media planner?

Or, is it the idea that the traditional and interactive media planners will begin planning in the same room, sharing information and plans?

Maybe it is the concept that budgets will be pooled and utilized without barriers or hindrances?

In my opinion, Integration in the planning department can be defined by a word that has become very popular in my vocabulary - Accountability. I have mentioned several times before that all aspects of the Advertising/Marketing Industry are being held accountable for their delivery. Planners are not protected from this accountability any more than the rest of the industry.

Interactive planning has been viewed as a quicker turn-around.


In practical business terms, interactive planning is typically viewed as a shorter turn-around, less intricate, more accountable form of advertising.

While the traditional media are learning about true accountability, Print and TV have been thought of as long term, more complex, less accountable forms of advertising.

In the middle ground, are Direct Mail, Direct Response, TV and Outdoor. These are more accountable, require less of a lead time, but can be more in-depth.

So, what do we need to think about to create more integrated plans? First, we must start with the fact that interactive advertising, like other forms of advertising, need longer lead-times. The typical 3-4 weeks that has become the industry standard is not enough time to develop an effective interactive plan. At the same time, an integrated plan cannot be developed if each medium is held to a different standard of measurement and accountability.

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In order for truly integrated planning to occur, there needs to be a senior media or account person that needs to stay objective and above the individual media segments to help bring the plan together. An example would be to create a true “Media Director” position that is not specifically over the interactive or the traditional media, but over the entire media planning/buying activities. This person(s) focus needs to be on the client growth rather than internal agency agendas.

This leaves the problem of Accountability - where we started. The world is used to reallocation, cancellation and optimization - fundamentals of the industry. Traditional advertising is slowly getting caught up and into the current accountability way of thinking. Interactive media professionals are poised for the fast paced environment, while the traditional media professional brings the ability to deal with the complexity of offline advertising.

So what is the answer? Training and Cross Training. Doing so gives your client a better media department to handle their advertising, as well as creates better senior media professionals that understand the big picture and not just a single form of advertising

Start training now to prepare your agency for the eventual integration that will become mainstream media as we move into the future. Resistance will happen, but integration is inevitable. And the sooner you are integrated, the sooner you have the competitive advantage!

To Integrate or Not to Integrate...That is the competitive question.