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thinking

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Paid Media

MEDIA SERIES
2 OF 4

The Almighty Ad Dollar of 2020

THE UNITED STATES OF PAID MEDIA

With the constant evolution and addition of streaming content and social and digital platforms, the landscape of paid media continues to change month after month. As marketers, it's difficult to keep up. And during these somewhat uncertain times, being smarter and more proactive with your paid media plan could be just what you need to keep your business in the black. That's why, in this issue of Thinking, we've pinpointed some of the most important tips, strategies and takeaways that will help you reach your target audience and spend your marketing dollars more effectively and efficiently.

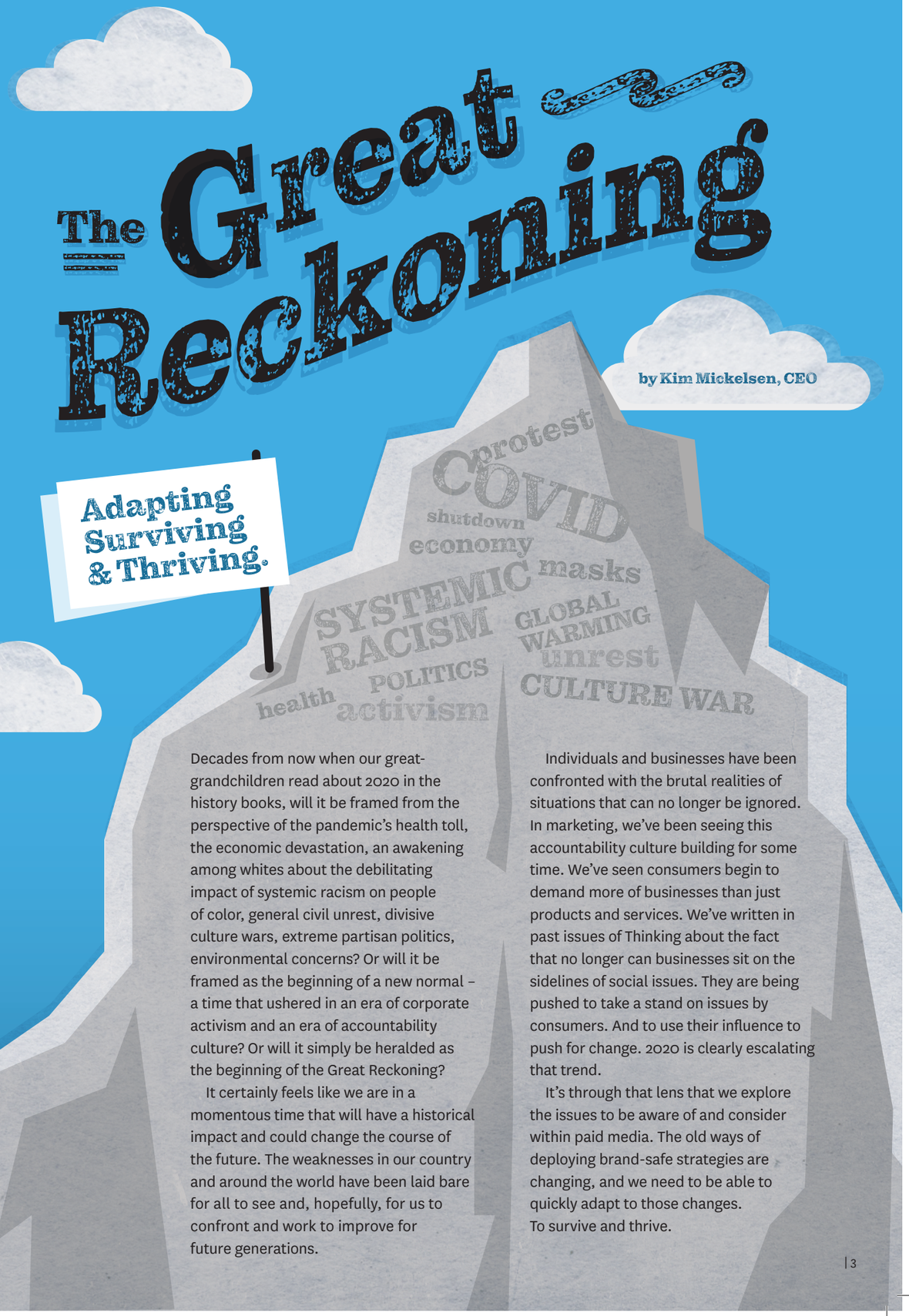
IN DIGITAL TARGETING WE TRUST

AUG 2020

Thinking is a collection of our knowledge, musings, tidbits, pretty drawings and any other information that helps businesses create successful marketing efforts. Thinking is entirely produced by the big-time thinkers at Bozell in Omaha, Neb. You can view these articles, as well as more Thinking, at bozell.com. Questions or suggestions? Email thinking@bozell.com.

The Great Reckoning

by Kim Mickelsen, CEO



Decades from now when our great-grandchildren read about 2020 in the history books, will it be framed from the perspective of the pandemic's health toll, the economic devastation, an awakening among whites about the debilitating impact of systemic racism on people of color, general civil unrest, divisive culture wars, extreme partisan politics, environmental concerns? Or will it be framed as the beginning of a new normal – a time that ushered in an era of corporate activism and an era of accountability culture? Or will it simply be heralded as the beginning of the Great Reckoning?

It certainly feels like we are in a momentous time that will have a historical impact and could change the course of the future. The weaknesses in our country and around the world have been laid bare for all to see and, hopefully, for us to confront and work to improve for future generations.

Individuals and businesses have been confronted with the brutal realities of situations that can no longer be ignored. In marketing, we've been seeing this accountability culture building for some time. We've seen consumers begin to demand more of businesses than just products and services. We've written in past issues of Thinking about the fact that no longer can businesses sit on the sidelines of social issues. They are being pushed to take a stand on issues by consumers. And to use their influence to push for change. 2020 is clearly escalating that trend.

It's through that lens that we explore the issues to be aware of and consider within paid media. The old ways of deploying brand-safe strategies are changing, and we need to be able to quickly adapt to those changes.
To survive and thrive.

BY JIM MINGE
SENIOR CONTENT DEVELOPER

WHY UPFRONT MEDIA BUYING OFFERS AN ADVANTAGE.

First dibs. If you're a media buyer, that phrase makes you salivate like Pavlov's pup. That's because buying early comes down to that simple expression. Long-view national studies, in-depth magazine articles, college marketing classes – all of these resources explain why buying early puts advertisers in the driver's seat.

And if your business makes media buys on an annual basis, you want to be able to say, "I got first dibs." Here are three big reasons why:

NEGOTIATION

The power of negotiation is key. Going to market with a full budget in hand and paying for a year's worth of ads up front lets you lock in lower rates, which helps secure more impressions. Plus, inflation and higher rates won't affect your business's marketing budget – you're set. That ultimately means more bang for your advertising buck, and more eyeballs will see your message.

TIMING

Think about it this way: Popeye's pal Wimpy liked to say, "I'll gladly pay you on Tuesday for a hamburger today." If you're a media outlet (a TV station, website, popular app, billboard company, newspaper, etc.), you don't want Wimpys. You want a business that pays you today for advertising on Tuesday. That helps the media companies meet annual quotas early. And, hey, who doesn't like to be paid in advance? And now they owe you. This spurs media outlets to offer premium placements and sponsorships and, perhaps most important, block your competitors from doing the same.

PLANNING

When you invest in media a year in advance, that gives your business the luxury of synchronizing your marketing with strategic placements, as well as the ability to craft engaging messages that might take more time to plan. Now you can create that cool video series aimed at introducing your business to Gen Z, and your screen time is waiting and ready in the wings.

THE 'WHY' IS BASIC, THE 'HOW' IS NOT

While understanding the "why" in up-front media buying is simple, executing it certainly is not. Strategic media buying is a skill where chess master-like media buyers plan and strategize several months in advance. That's especially crucial in years that contain local and national elections, Olympics or other events that take up coveted ad space. Additionally, holidays, the Super Bowl and other annual happenings are in high demand, too.

Taking care of your company's marketing buy for the year lets these chess masters do their thing – like negotiating lower rates in the best time slots and on the hottest online platforms, and helping you shape your messaging with out-of-the-box campaigns.

In other words, when a skilled media buyer makes up-front media buys for you, it allows you to focus more on your business and your products. Plus, when a competitor wants the same sought-after ad spot, you can say, "Sorry, I got first dibs."

FROM BOOB TUBE TO DREAM STREAM

THE GREAT SHIFT OF TV AD BUYS

BY MIKE GILLOON
DIRECTOR OF STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION

Since social distancing took hold in March, several friends and I have been sharing weekly trivia questions with each other. It's a good way to pass the time and stay connected when in-person gatherings are on hold.

One of this week's questions, from an old roommate, stuck out: According to Nielsen, what were the highest-rated TV series in the fall of 1990, 2000, 2010 and 2019?

No, the answer is not "The Super Bowl." The question is about programs (think sitcoms or dramas or reality shows) that ran over the course of a season. But the real interesting nugget isn't the name of each show. It's the rating.

In the fall of 1990, America's top-rated TV show averaged a 21.3 rating. Basically, that means about 21 percent of Americans tuned in each week. A decade later, the top-rated show averaged a 17.4, down a bit over the decade. In 2010, the rating dipped again to 14.5. And last fall, the country's #1 program averaged a 10.9. That's a 48% decrease in 30 years.

So, what happened? It's not that people are watching less television. But two things did occur. The first was variety. Ever since cable TV exploded in the 1980s, choices grew each year. By the 2000s, Americans could choose between dozens of cable channels – from MTV to ESPN to HGTV to Bravo to the Food Network. With more programs available, average ratings for each program tended to be lower. Gone were the days of everyone watching the same few shows.

But that wasn't everything. When Americans began to buy TVs that could connect to the internet (often called Connected TVs), their options grew from "a lot of shows" to "just about everything ever recorded." If you could once watch a video on your phone or your laptop, you could now watch it on your big-screen TV.

As variety exploded with Connected TVs, the power of traditional TV networks to charge high prices for big ratings took a huge hit. But that power did not disappear. It just shifted.

It shifted away from the companies that could target shows to those that could target people. And no one targets people more accurately than digital advertising.

Yes, digital still includes the things you'd normally associate it with: ads that run before a YouTube video, links on Google when you search for a restaurant, or the little square banners on your desktop when you read ESPN.com. But the power of digital marketing has never been about banner ads or pre-roll videos. The power of digital marketing has always been about targeting. In 1990, 2000 or even 2010, advertisers didn't know much about who was watching America's #1 program. They just knew that a lot of people were. And so that's where they spent their money. But now that 80% of American households have a Connected TV (up from 38% in 2012), advertisers know a lot more about the internet habits of those watching TV on any given day. The more knowledge advertisers have, the better use they can make of their ad dollars.

So what does that mean for you? The car dealership? The retail store? The professional services group? It means that the information – the targeting data – you use to power your search ads or email marketing is the same targeting data that can be used to purchase your next TV buy.

Because the power has shifted. If you know your main customer is a 50-something dad who drives a Chevy and lives in Fremont, it's a lot easier for you to reach him on TV.

Back in 1990, you might have bought an ad in Cheers and assumed he tuned in. In 2000, you would have guessed he was watching Survivor. In 2010 you probably hoped he tuned in to American Idol and last fall you prayed he watched your spot in Sunday Night Football.

Thanks to the digital revolution in television, the days of assuming and guessing and hoping and praying are behind us.

80% OF AMERICAN HOUSEHOLDS HAVE A CONNECTED TV

BONUS TRIVIA: WHICH TV SERIES WON THE EMMY FOR BEST DRAMA IN 2000?

ANSWER ON BACK

SAFETY FIRST?

THE REDEFINING OF "BRAND SAFE" IN MEDIA BUYING.

BY JACKIE MILLER
CHIEF MARKETING OFFICER

Over the last 10+ years, digital media buying and various targeting methods have grown exponentially. And as a media buyer, the old way of looking at brand-safe placements has shifted, too. Nowadays, the definition of "explicit" or "inappropriate" content has expanded into politics, news, influencer/celebrity personal affairs and more.

For example, in December of 2019, Hallmark and Zola found themselves in a tug of war between advocacy groups, with the brands and consumers taking the brunt of the ramifications. Zola—a wedding planning site—had purchased ad space within the Hallmark Holiday Movies programming and ran an ad that featured a same-sex couple. Hallmark received complaints from an advocacy group saying the content was not family friendly. Feeling the pressure, Hallmark pulled the ad. But word quickly spread of the decision and the opposing viewpoint and backlash grew. Hallmark, trying to avoid controversy, was smack dab in the middle of it, and Zola was forced to defend the placements in the first place.

With consumers and advocacy groups pushing and pulling marketers and publishers in various directions, what exactly does "brand safe" mean today?

It means focusing on more than placement. You have to start with an understanding of your brand in regard to brand promise, value propositions, mission, vision, company culture and core beliefs. Then look beyond a publisher's placements and content and understand their brand, culture and core beliefs. Brand safe is now about who and why, not just what and how. We are way beyond brand reputation management and mitigating risk. Consumers and advocacy groups alike are now looking at these placements as endorsements and holding you accountable for those choices.

BRAND SAFE → BRAND ENHANCED +

We are in a very polarized media landscape, but there is still hope for more than just brand-safe placements. We can move from brand safe to brand enhanced.

HOW DO YOU ENHANCE BRANDS WITH MEDIA BUYING?

1. **Focus on a strategy** that surrounds your audience and reinforces your brand promise.

2. **Seek out media partnerships**, not just placements.

3. **Stay informed** and keep your finger on the pulse.

4. **Optimize** early and often.

Want to see these tips in action? Check out our 529 College Savings Plans "For Their Future" campaign case study where we helped secure a media partnership that benefits both the publisher and the brand.

Say "I Do" TO A HEALTHY BRAND PARTNER

By Tim Young, Creative Director

You've worked hard to ensure you're partnering with your ideal organization. Your reasons to exist are simpatico, and you share commonalities when it comes to reaching a specific audience. All that's left to do now is to get them to say your name and use your logo as often as possible, right? Not if you truly want to connect with your audience.

Think of a branded partnership like a healthy marriage. Both partners have specific characteristics that make you stronger together. Additionally, they provide value to each other and their mutual friends.

The takeaway here is that integrating creative is way more than placement. It's about creating a common bond that feels real and purposeful for the audience. Without this authenticity, your partnership could be perceived as fake and have the opposite intended effect for both organizations.

by Rod Coleman,
Head of Paid Media

Emma and her Widgets

A tale of attribution modeling and tracking the sale.

Emma's Garden Emporium just sold its first custom-made watering widgets. One was purchased via Emma's website, and one was bought at her brick-and-mortar store. Emma gives an employee a high-five!

Like anyone in the business of selling products, Emma would like to sell more. And she knows one of the best ways to do that is to learn what led to the sales of those widgets. She wants to determine the path those customers took to get to her stores – the digital and the physical – so she can focus her marketing dollars on those paths.

Was it the Facebook ads? The promoted tweet? Targeted display ads?

What Emma wants to understand is her customer's conversion journey. Ultimately revealing which ads had the most effect on an individual purchase. In order to get a complete picture, Emma will have to assign credit to an interaction or ad exposure.

Today, assigning credit to one or more of those marketing channels – especially on digital formats – is much easier. And yet, much harder. Wait. What?

Let us explain. The advent of digital media made tracking customer touchpoints much easier. However, the digital media landscape has become quite expansive. On top of that, consumers bounce from one website to another using multiple devices. For instance, User X might be a cord-cutter who saw an ad on Hulu. Then they started browsing the internet on their mobile device where they also saw a display ad. Now their interest is piqued, causing them to search the product on Google, which led to a purchase on the website. In general, it can be extremely hard to identify which channels to invest in. However, an attribution model can reveal that conversion path, telling you exactly what ads your customer was exposed to before the purchase.

If you're Emma, finding the best attribution model for your business can be stressful. Should the first ad the consumer saw get the most credit? Or maybe the last touchpoint? Many marketers choose the last click, but that ignores the other touchpoints consumers had before making a purchase. It can also cause you to miss out on quality marketing opportunities that led to the sale.

Deciphering attribution models is where marketers come in. It's what they do. They've spent countless hours of their lives studying this precise, measurable science known as attribution. They've studied every attribution model available and determined which is best for you and your business.

Tracking the customers who buy online is easy. But what about the customers who come into her store to shop? Many advertisers have trouble with this, but there are various tools that allow you to measure offline (in-person) conversions. The two behemoths Facebook and Google allow you to upload offline conversions. Don't have that data? No problem. Marketers can also help you identify customers who were exposed to your ad and also visited your location. In some respect, this can partially close the sales loop.

Again, this is what marketers do. They track every dollar you spend on marketing and advertising and measure its success. They call that Return on Ad Spend (ROAS). They know the latest trends, the latest media platforms, and they know what's next (because it's constantly changing).

Ultimately, a business benefits most from a layered measurable approach to media. Integrating with consumers' lives, whether they are in front of a TV or computer screen, scrolling on a mobile device, listening to a podcast or streaming music during their commute. All of these together can help a business get in front of consumers at the right moment. It's important to understand which of these mixes intersect with your customer's life the most. Attribution models can help with that. In fact, it's what ultimately led to Emma selling more watering widgets. And handing out more high-fives.

An attribution model can tell you exactly what ads your customer was exposed to before purchase.

Don't get lost in the target-audience maze. Use paid media to seek the consumer you desire.

Trivia answer: The West Wing