

Is Digital Media In Trouble?

By Aaron Foellmi, Vice President – The RTC Group

Below are just a few of the headlines from 2015. The media industry is seeing a tectonic shift as the bubble of social media pops, online advertising becomes the battlefield for tech giants, and the high expectations of good ol'e Profit and Loss are felt by cash hungry media start-ups.

Apple's iOS 9 takes ad blockers to dangerous new heights

Infoworld

Welcome to hell: Apple vs. Google vs. Facebook and the slow death of the web

The Verge

Dangerous liaisons: how the Ashley Madison hack ended the age of innocence in cybersecurity

Information Age

Groupon cutting 1,100 jobs, shutting down operations in 7 countries

USAToday

Hackers Helping Businesses Commit Click Fraud on Competitors' AdWords

PC Magazine

LinkedIn will pay \$13M for sending those awful emails

Fortune Magazine

Twitter's C.E.O., Dick Costolo, Is Set to Exit, Feeling Heat of Criticism

New York Times

Twitter CEO Jack Dorsey Confirms Layoffs With Tweet

Wired

A 'Crisis' in Online Ads: One-Third of Traffic Is Bogus

Wall Street Journal

YouTube Makes Advertisers Pay For Fake Views Made By Bots

TechTimes

Welcome to the Internet of Thingies: 61.5% of Web Traffic Is Not Human

The Atlantic

Arrow Electronics Acquires United Technical Publishing Division of Hearst Business Media

Yahoo Finance

Europe's top court rejects 'Safe Harbor' ruling (endangering international email marketing)

USAToday

For those of us working in the marketing trenches this leaves a lot to be insecure about as we plan for 2016. Of course digital media is here to stay, and strategically there is a place in most portfolios for online digital buys – but its more imperative than ever to weight the risks and the rewards objectively. The cost for many will be depressed sales and diminished brands.

Three Questions to Ask Yourself about Your Media Partner

1. Is engaging content a pillar of the media strategy?

What are the three rules of real estate? Location, Location and Location. Likewise media companies are similarly tied to their content. Content drives audience engagement. In the past few years this has been interpreted to mean that MORE content drives audience engagement...but as we've found – this simply isn't true. GREAT content drives audience engagement. Ask your media partners:

- Is content original?
- Is content objective and unbiased?
- Is content technical, provide depth and engage the reader?
- Is content delivered in such a way as to make it a "must read" when presented to the reader?

Alarmingly, large companies are purchasing and integrating media companies and editors into their marketing organizations. This phenomenon has created a vacuum of opportunity for companies that traditionally would have engaged objective outlets leading many to actually BUY/SELL editorial.

2. Are the numbers lying to you?

Over the past few years, the focus has been on numbers. Page views, hits, clicks, opens and downloads. These numbers provide a warm blanket of good feelings for most marketers reporting their performance to superiors.

A recent review of tech industry's published audience numbers found that a sizable portion of media companies report audiences larger than their target markets. *How can this be?* Ask your media partners:

- How much of your audience numbers do you attribute to NHT (non-human traffic)?
- Is your reported audience the sum of all your media outlets, or a count of identifiable users?
- What is the total available market of the industry you are targeting and do your numbers make sense in that context?

3. What is the real-world impact of my marketing?

The information age has made it possible for information to be available 24/7, but for marketing professionals this means the pendulum has swung. What used to be finite channels to engage has become infinite. Getting real customers to engage in real interactions is, in fact, more difficult than ever. Ask your media partners:

- Do you offer ways for me to engage with your audience directly?
- How do you gauge the impact of each marketing or advertising channel to affirm their success?
- What is the shelf life of each campaign or channel activity?

Reach and Frequency

At the end of the day these two tenants of marketing are as universal as ever. Reach the right people at the right time with the right message. Media professionals are experts at creating engaged audiences, and even though the channels through which we communicate have vastly expanded -- the basic truths of marketing have stayed the same. Look for partners you trust, with audiences that trust them.

Shameless Pitch

Learn more about how you can optimize marketing and advertising budgets to re-energize your product and brand outreach with The RTC Group – a TRUSTED media partner for 30 years.