

Fire Control for Networks and Advertisers

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Folks continue to seek out news, information and entertainment the best and easiest way they can, only the means keep changing — and it is getting easier. At the same time the commercial interests must get their message across at all costs — and that may be getting harder to do. So why is the electronic media under so much scrutiny and why is the public and the government so inflamed about the media? Even Michael Powell, the FCC Commissioner, that paragon of simplistic free market values and truisms is up in arms, and, God forbid, about to take some action, yet he knows not what. Technology is part of the reason as is the growing concentration of media in the hands of a few — but there is much more to this story. The greater threat to business as usual is the growing perception on the part of a free public that business via its programming and advertising has crossed the line and now threatens the privacy and the sanctity of the home and its family values. Oops! So it is time for business wise

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men to sound the retreat, to act to assuage hurt feelings and to re-assert their faith in the supremacy of the American family once more. Lest, in its anger, the public rises up and squashes the miscreants who bring an excess of violence, profanity and shame to the people. Consequently it is high time to offer up new tools to correct the programming and advertising misplays in ways that make it more acceptable to the public, while also efficient for selling the corporate message or vending its products. Herein we present a set of building blocks to serve this purpose.

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CMS NewsLine

“Validating the Middle Ground”



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A Media System Under Threat

We all enjoy the electronic media as it entertains and informs us and brings the world of reality and imagination into our lives. By its very pervasiveness and attractiveness it can amuse and delight us. At times and in a powerful graphic way it also brings in troubling tidings from the outside world that disrupt the tranquility of the home and perturb the family nest. As the electronics continue to improve and interoperability and convergence gain true functionality in the networked home, the various forms of communications, computing and entertainment are melding and merging together for an even greater impact on our experience.

These media also tend by their convenience and sheer brilliance to block out other more traditional communication and entertainment sources. This in turn limits the variety as well as the depth of the message received by the public, especially its children. The net result is that a high percentage of all that we perceive (or imagine) about the world around us is now entering our lives this electronic way. Therein lie the opportunity and the danger, and trouble is indeed brewing.

With all its convenience the advanced media also threatens to disrupt the way the young are prepared for life and the way they are taught values by their families. To the degree that the media suggests new standards of morality and new norms of behavior outside of an individual family's value system, it upsets the time-honored order of

society, especially the role of the family and the support structures provided by the schools, the churches and the many public and private institutions. Here we have a *Force Majeure* challenge to the electronic media to manage and regulate itself in line with the public good that it cannot overlook, or else. This is certainly the case in a cable industry that still imagines that, as a private network, it is immune from FCC style government regulation or the will of the people. A good guess is that it is badly mistaken to think that

it can ignore its public obligations simply by offering up CSPAN and playing the PAC game with the public authorities — good luck.

“But how can business get on as usual in the face of so many new disruptive technologies that upset the existing business models?”

Karl Marx, the economist and patron saint of failed communism was right about one thing, economics does indeed drive history. The electronic media is now truly massive, complex and very expensive to build and to operate. Indeed hundreds of billions of dollars flow through its many systems in the form of consumer electronics, subscriptions, pay per view, advertising and other revenue sources. The many advertisers need to reach their public to sell their products and services on TV and elsewhere. Thus they must have access to TV, the Internet, radio and other media touch points or they are in danger of losing out. But how can business get on as usual in the face of so many new disruptive technologies that upset the existing business models? How can advertisers employ advanced media in ways that help them grow their

businesses without overreaching in ways that violate the private lives of their customers, the public? There is also the challenge the government and the public face as advanced technology races forward at an ever accelerating pace to disrupt the status quo. Indeed it is now the case where the seller, the buyer and the regulator had all better beware.

Command and Control

As many a free marketer will readily agree, when a market is getting into trouble any effective self-regulation is to be preferred over governmental controls. All the brouhaha and criticisms of near-over-the-edge programming such as on *The Jerry Springer Show*, *The Howard Stern Show* and recent Super Bowl halftime show have forced the hand of the electronic media and its regulators at the FCC to respond to a great public outcry for more control over obscenity on TV. While complaining about the need for artistic freedom, freedom of the press and the like those who control and profit from the TV media seem obliged to really do something about the excessive sex, violence and profanity on display today. The answer for the business world is suggested in Adam Smith's *The Wealth of Nations* in the form of better more effective command and control over one's business. As public pressure reaches out to punish those advertisers who sponsor and support offending programming, it is the advertisers who are demanding that the media delivery system becomes

more responsive to their needs, but how?

The unregulated free market answer is to be found in investing to develop effective new tools to once again place effective command and control in the hands of advertisers and networks. That is in new ways of directing the degree of shock, startle and stimulate designed into media programming and advertising to make them impactful — while also not going over acceptable social standards. What is needed is a better way for networks and advertisers to clearly and in an unambiguous way specify what they expect from a program or an ad in terms of its Inform, Shock and Entertain (I, S, E or ICE) elements. Further, these network and advertising folks would like to be able to place meaningful ratings on content and advertising so as to accurately match them up with the demographics of the viewing or target audience.

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Finally, by means of established statistical methods the advertisers need to effectively gauge the resulting impression their advertising has on the public, especially in terms of the balance of ICE the public feeds back it is experiencing. When this is working advertisers, programmers and regulators will have regained control over the likes of Howard Stern and Janet Jackson, or the later will no longer be in view.

The Fire Next Time

In the meantime an embattled U.S. Congress is quite busy trying to redress the shock and indignation

left behind by the last Super Bowl by imposing new rules and regulations — always a questionable thing. Yet the Super Bowl was indeed an event at which media excess reached the bounds of civility for a great many people including some media watchdogs at the FCC, as a graphic public display of what is rude and crude was put on stage. Worse of all millions of parents were caught unaware as their children inadvertently lost a bit of their innocence. Consequently, obscenity is now under careful legislative scrutiny as Senators and Congressmen jockey for attention and position on the evening news. All the while the accused dark puppeteers of media profanity and excess — as in Viacom/CBS — try as they may to hide in the shadows

as they seek once again to find protection and redemption under the canopy of the First Amendment. All the while the excessive violence also commonly found on the electronic media is said to be better left for another day. As to Janet Jackson, she is [sic] apparently just another misunderstood minority gal reaching for the light of fame and fortune. How truly misunderstood and maligned she may be is some say to be understood in the context of James Baldwin's *The Fire Next Time* or America's dreadful history of black slavery — give us a break. If only Jane Fonda were available to explain it all to us!

The electronic media left to its own commercial needs and devices has at times chosen to play 'tough' love with the public by subjecting it to

unmerciful degrees of insidious excess of all sorts. The more stimulation — say shock — in the form of action, sex, violence and profanity it employs some reason, the more an enlivened and duped viewer population is likely to stay tuned. After all, biological forms are to a large extent pleasure and pain centers ready to reach out for the one while morbidly fearing the other. So, why not play a visceral tune to their sentient biomass, one that harmonizes with what they are genetically designed to crave while reminding them of what

they fear most or loathe? The only practical question for some media managers is how to continue to get away with it — at least a while longer, while government power brokers busy themselves with such things as the PAC game

that brings all that soft money? While Senator John McCain may have sincerely tried to place limits on the PACs he was always badly outnumbered on both sides of the aisle. In Washington DC perhaps more than in any other capital the media seduces as well as threatens the body politic — or so it seems no matter who is in power.

Indeed media excess has to a degree been responsible for promoting a whole generation of folks to accept the truly unacceptable as though it were the new norm. Say as in another vulgarity or shooting scene on display. Why not? Another monster looming in a dark corner or nude scene, no great surprise there, and so on until some human sensitivity is lost. At least until an even greater degree of shock is offered up to

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revitalize the interest. Examples abound, even in such widely acclaimed movies as: *Seven*, *Saving Private Ryan*, *The Passion of Christ*, and *Braveheart*. How convenient it is to meld extra brutality within sufficient context so as to hide behind historic fact or freedom of artistic expression, and thereby shock the public once more. But seriously, how many violent scenes does anyone need to get the Normandy Invasion horror in full view at the start of the movie *Saving Private Ryan*? In truth, probably a lot less than director Spielberg (or Mel Gibson in his films) offered up gratuitously for fame and fortune. No doubt when the next crucifixion movie is made the true historic representation of crucified bodies left to be eaten by dogs will be put on graphic display in all their horror as wild dogs consume their entrails. An honest broker might be led to suspect that the excessive shock in all this media content is simply pandering to the worst of human instincts — including those of the now ‘pious’ Mad Max.

New Media Tools for a New Time

This brings us to a much-needed examination of the tools needed to begin to master the Inform, Shock and Entertain components (I, S, E or the ICE) that make up the core of electronic entertainment and advertising. Some might say that all that is required to represent media content is Inform and Entertain — but they are mistaken, as stimulation is at times also needed to maintain a proper level of interest and

attention. We choose to call this component Shock although the terms Stimulate, Startle or Prod may at times be more accurate. Within this Shock component of media content and advertising we encompass obscenity, violence, trauma, horror, sex, profanity, loud noises and all the other elements that may trigger an adrenalin rush or a visceral in-the-gut atavistic response. Some might question how all of these elements can all fit in one category. Easy, they all trigger the wake up shock that leads to more focus and attention — if not interest.

Given this model, is there a better more controlled way to offer up entertainment and advertising that

satisfies and protects the public interest without resorting to high-minded censorship? Is there a way for networks and advertisers to more descriptively and accurately specify what they want and what they will

tolerate? Stay tuned as we begin to illuminate the Alvairi-Derfler Ad Value™ Service as a prime candidate for a new media ratings system and better command and control on the part of networks and advertisers. A good place to begin is with a few suggestive descriptions of the new tools that can help set the table for a new media targeting command and control paradigm:

1) ICE — The combination of Inform (I), Shock (S for Startle or Stimulate) and Entertain (E) elements that make up a show or advertisement. The blending in of degrees of each of these

“...is there a better more controlled way to offer up entertainment and advertising that satisfies and protects the public interest without ...censorship?”

elements in a manner that stimulates interest and attention for a show or an ad while also entertaining and informing the public. The plotline of the script may remain the same, but the emphasis can change dramatically as more or less information, shock and entertainment is stitched into the script and actualized by means of advanced media.

2) **ICE Diagram** — The use of an equilateral triangle diagram wherein each of the three corners represents 100% of one of the components and 0% of the other two to depict the level of Inform, Shock and Entertain of a media piece. Thus each point on the diagram, say (I, S, E) = (40%, 20%, 40%), totals 100% percent and corresponds to the average contribution of each of these three components within a show, advertisement or content segment. In reality as the elements I, S and E are at times highly interdependent, very little programming can exist at the extreme points. Over the course of an ad or a show the ICE mix will vary considerably, but an average level of ICE can still be highly descriptive and serve as a target.

3) **The ICE Zone** — A contiguous regular or odd shaped area on an ICE Diagram that designates an I, S, and E or ICE target zone for a media piece. Such a zone can be made part of a specification by an advertiser, a network, a programmer or an ad agency to act as a guideline for the design of a program or an ad. A follow

up ICE Zone can subsequently represent the results of a polling or statistical analysis of the public's perception of where on the ICE chart a given show or ad belongs. Used in these manners, it can offer the advertiser or the programmer a degree of command and control over an advertising that is produced, over how such an advertising is targeted to a given demographic and even how well it may fit in a given show — which is also represented by an ICE Zone.

4) **The Alvairi-Derfler MOD™ System** — Or Modulus of Distraction that on a scale of 0% to 100% measures the extent or degree to which a viewer is distracted at any point in time as he or she watches TV in the presence of cell phones, PCs, PDAs, game boxes, door bells and the like. At 100% the viewer is essentially unaware of what is going on in the TV show or advertisement. It follows that a high value of the MOD may necessitate a corresponding higher degree of Shock in the ICE mix or else the viewer may be lost to a given show or ad. Indeed in a multimedia multitasking world it may be necessary to design in different combinations of I, S and E in programming and advertising to correspond to situations wherein the MOD is high — as in, for example, TV programming to be shown in noisy airport lounges or busy hotel lobbies.

5) **The Zone of Attention Loss** — That is typically a mid-range on the MOD corresponding to a level of

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distraction zone where a significant degree of viewer attention begins to be lost. It is within this zone that a viewer is likely to lose his or her connection with a show or an ad. Less distraction than this may not impact the viewer greatly while any more may not matter at all as the viewer has most likely already tuned out. It is in this Zone of Attention Loss that various strategies can be employed to help maintain focus and attention by changing the mix of I, S, and E. This Zone of Attention can be somewhat dependent on the target audience, for example small children are more likely to be easily distracted. It may also be impacted by other factors as well such as time of day, where weariness can cause a drop of attention even though the MOD remains low. That is to say that late night programming and advertising may require a shift of the ICE to be effective.

6) **The Alvairi-Derfler D-ICE™ System** — A pyramid shaped three-dimensional object whose base is the ICE Diagram that corresponds to a zero level of distraction and whose apex or top of the pyramid corresponds to MOD = 100%. On this chart any horizontal slice made to truncate the top of this pyramid at say MOD = m% now has as its top surface the ICE diagram for an m% level of distraction. An oblong shaped zone on such a D-ICE diagram can therefore represent the mixes of I, S and E of a show or ad for a viewing environment wherein a good deal of distraction is common — such as a sports bar. Thus an ICE

diagram may be insufficient to represent what is going on in a viewing arena full of distractions: with cell phones ringing, PCs in use, Play Stations in play and the like. The base of the pyramid or D-ICE chart is just the ICE diagram.

7) **LOCUS** on an ICE or D-ICE Diagram — The Locus of a media piece on an ICE or D-ICE diagram is the trajectory made over time by an ad or a show from its beginning to its end. It displays the tracks that correspond

“To what degree does all of the distraction in the home and the multitasking behavior of its residents affect TV viewing behavior...”

to the modulating use of I, S, and E from the start to the end of the piece. In theory it is a winding twisted line; in practice and in the way it can be estimated or measured it is more likely to come up as a wormlike Zone within an ICE or D-ICE diagram. For example, for an advertisement the starting point of the locus is on the side of Shock, then it migrates in the direction of Entertainment followed by a move to inform (about the product or service being advertised) and finally ends with a move back toward Shock. Indeed each genre of programming and advertising will have a typical telltale locus shape as an ICE signature. Thus targeting an ad or a show for command and control by an advertiser or a programmer can in part be accomplished by designing the shape of the ‘worm’.

8) **COG** of the ICE or DICE — The COG or center of gravity is simply the average location or position on an ICE or D-ICE of the LOCUS of an ad or

program. The COG is therefore useful as a primary design point for a show or an ad. When the design team gets together at the advertising studio, or when the media buyer looks to pick a show in which to place his ads, the COG of an ICE or D-ICE diagram zone is one starting point. It is also a useful command point for the advertiser to establish as part of his instructions to his ad agencies and media buyers. Later measurement of the ICE impact of a show or an ad can provide the feedback and control necessary for a viable media system.

9) **CONSEX** or Context Sensitive Execution — This is the idea of executing a program or an advertisement in a context sensitive manner, so that a viewer is able to maintain continuity with what is in train or going on. It is a powerful way of sustaining interest, focus and attention on a media piece. A failure to provide CONSEX means that even at a low level of distraction or MOD a viewer may reach for the remote control — and it's bye bye birdie. Herein a non sequitur transition from scene to scene can often mean no more viewer.

10) **INCA** or In-Context Advertising — In this tuned-in form of advertising an ad is carefully placed within programming so as to have a high degree of in-context continuity with the content or programming that precedes it. Thus one can say that an INCA ad has CONSEX in the way it fits with a show, with the ads next to it

and with its position in the media stream. INCA advertising is one powerful way to combat a high Modulus of Distraction or MOD. For example, placing an advertisement for a Caribbean cruise within a travel show makes it an INCA ad, as is a hot dog commercial during a baseball game broadcast. On the other hand, a female fashion mall ad within an action movie is not INCA. As more and more living rooms contain game boxes and PCs, TV advertising needs to be presented the INCA way.

New Questions, New Answers

The very nature of all of this transformational change pleads for a rational evaluation of new tools like the ones presented

here so that they may be added to the electronic media businesses toolbox. We ask you to ponder:

“To what extent must advertisers and programmers regain command / control over the ICE components of shows and ads in order to protect their business...”

Q1 — To what degree does all of the distraction in the home and the multitasking behavior of its residents affect TV viewing behavior and the impact of the ICE in the programming and advertising space?

Q2 — To what extent must advertisers and programmers regain command and control over the ICE components of shows and ads in order to protect their business interests?

Q3 — How critical is it to a media channel or program to operate under a high INCA (IN Context Advertising) standard to maintain the viability of its TV advertising in the face of ever higher MOD values?

Q4 — To what degree must the TV media in its programming and advertising adjust its targeting in order to continue to satisfy a more and more mobile and active audience?

Q5 — As Interactive TV begins to populate the TV experience how can it be employed to reenergize and refocus the viewing public to its product, its service and its message?

The easy to employ ICE and D-ICE diagrams are useful tools in the process of targeting and redirecting TV content and advertising as Television struggles to compete in the new multimedia home. So are the MOD and INCA concepts we presented here. They can be used to create a much greater degree of command and control protection for advertisers and networks that continue to fear for their brands as they shun the idea of new government controls. For more on these subjects and the details of new methods for creating more effective TV advertising, please also reference the CMS NewsLine issues listed below:

1) On Advertising Metrics we have: *Making a Good Impression — The Search for New TV Advertising Metrics*, L.B. Willner with R.G. Kalsow, CMS NewsLine, September 2003.

2) On Advertising Context we have: *Inca Sunrise — New Age TV Advertising*, L.B. Willner with R.G. Kalsow, CMS NewsLine, November 2003.

3) On Advertising Remake we have: *Advertising Dressed as Content*, L.B. Willner with R.G. Kalsow, CMS NewsLine, February 2004.

4) More about ICE in: *Media on Ice*, L.B. Willner with R.G. Kalsow, CMS NewsLine, March 2004.

Much more remains to be done before the challenge of the DVD, DVR and VOD to traditional TV model can lead to a better way for viewers and providers alike. But it is a challenge that must be faced, and soon, on Hollywood & Vine and on Madison Avenue.

(Leo Willner and Greg Kalsow contributed to this issue. In order to discuss any of these points with the authors, please e-mail them at: leo@ad-assoc.com, greg@ad-assoc.com)

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—Georgia Pech, Editor]

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KALSOW'S BACK-CHANNEL: “Validating the Middle Ground”

■ On Playing Monopoly — What is one to say about the newly minted peace accord between Microsoft and Sun that was recently announced? Is it a coincidence that it follows by a few weeks behind the European Union socking Microsoft to the tune of \$500 million in fines for more of its little monopolistic misdeeds? If only the U.S. Courts had shown the same guts and fortitude as these Europeans, as opposed to buckling in to the dark side. When Microsoft, that grand monopolist, throws a bone to Sun, the now nearly defunct competitor and formerly leading light of advanced computing, is it just for show — or what? As to Java by Sun, one of the greatest new ideas in computing — say since Von Neumann harmonized data and programs within a common computer memory — can it exist freely outside of Microsoft’s hidden cloisters? We think we smell a rat, do you? Never mind, for if the great IBM along with such allies as Apple, HP, Sun and the rest cannot keep Microsoft off their backs, perhaps it is too late and we should simply go ahead and declare Bill Gates President of the World by proclamation.

■ On Broadband World War One — The Internet is an Open Revenue Channel Access media service, or an ORCA. Yes it is! Thus anyone with the money to pay the tab can offer services on the Internet, and no one can stop them. All you have to do is get an Internet Service Provider to host your website etc. and bingo you are in business. So, strange to tell, such folks as MovieLink, MovieBeam and CinemaNow can provide videos for sale and rent via cable broadband. Wait up you say, cable is a closed network with its own tenant partners for VOD and PPV such as In Demand,

HBO and others. Surely they would never allow Open Revenue Channel Access or ORCA — as that is certainly commercial cable blasphemy! Ah yes, but the mighty dollar has spoken and rendered those cable service boys up for ORCA, all for sale via \$39.95 per month for cable broadband service. How soon will it be before the content folks, read studios, quietly cut these cable czars out of the rental of cable movies game? If it is indeed true that the capital and operating costs of delivering video via the Internet is vastly cheaper than via cable Head-end servers and workstations, standard cable VOD is moribund. Stay tuned.

■ On Broadband World War Two — Those clever folks at the RBOCs and related companies want to be ORCA styled broadband folks too. Yes indeed, so they too have lined up to provide their telephone broadband service that they call DSL. And now the war games are indeed on between them and the recently ORCA converted cable gatekeepers. While the cable boys may have a better technology, they are famous for poor service and for mistreating or ignoring their customers. All the while the RBOCs are the very embodiment of customer friendly — that is since they figured out that they are at risk of going out of business, like their dear old parent the original AT&T managed to do sub Rosa. Now the telephone companies fear Voice over Internet Protocol or VoIP, so broadband is all the rage with them. So the war is on as Cable offers the true two-way pipe to beat out Satellite while the Internet Application Providers and the RBOCs set out to eat their lunch. It all sounds like a play written for the deep blue sea — where fish eat fish you know. So stay tuned, as this is just beginning to get interesting.

[Your mileage may vary. —RGK]

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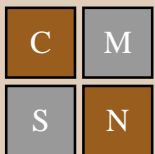
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