

## Advertising Unification A Bold Look Forward

By Leo B. Willner, Ph.D. with R. Gregory Kalsow  
Partners at Alvairi-Derfler Associates

The dynamics of an evolving electronics media have limited the ability of the advertising industry to remain on the leading edge as it sells the advertiser's message. Indeed its very ability to make advertising impressions when time shifting and ad skipping are in use on the part of TV viewers is in growing doubt. All the while the advertising economic engine (or bubble) just keeps rising as its part of the US economy has grown to well over a quarter trillion dollars per year. Yet the advanced media sector continues to flower with new capabilities and exciting applications, meaning that advertisers and their support team must work hard to keep pace. With so much money passing hands, some large stakeholders as in TV networks and advertising agencies are 'quietly' alarmed that matters may be getting out of hand. How is the advertising industry to prepare for the day big advertisers fully address this dilemma and (in all likelihood) change course? Especially in the way they engage the electronic media and choose a new mix of TV,

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PC and other advertising forms and venues.

Many questions and few answers are at hand for the moment, leaving the spin-doctors and pundits the task of confounding the troubled advertiser. In the end it will surely come down to a unification of advertising that improves the genre; and involves new technologies and new ways of advertising on the electronic media. In the meantime, the level of gain (and pain) will depend on the degree to which the 'landed' players and their powerful allies slow down progress as they look to sustain their gilded land holdings. Nonetheless, a new TV advertising order and the

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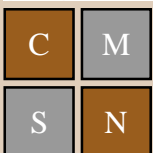
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*"Validating the Middle Ground"*



CMS NewsLine  
Alvairi-Derfler Associates  
Lake Forest, CA 92630  
Tel: +1.949.584.0989  
www.ad-assoc.com  
newsline@ad-assoc.com

progress it will bring in train will not be delayed for long, as superior new methods and systems will ensure that unification moves along. Yet as always the devil remains in the details. So let us take a look.

**I**ntegrated advertising databases, multi-platform delivery systems, Ad-ID, advanced coding and viewer interactivity with the message are all part of the support infrastructure that will power-up new advancements. These technologies are needed to enable a host of better targeted and more personalized advertising models. They can also support a multi-platform strategy many advertisers say they would prefer. Such enhancements will require sophisticated new computer applications involving advanced graphical user interfaces, multi-tiered data structures, complex algorithms and other schemes. These will be needed to transform the many innovative new advertising ideas that come along into robust workable systems. Thus when all is in place and up and running the new advertising applications that prove successful can readily take their proper place on the pallet of colors of the business — thereby raising the profits of all concerned.

One key factor to keep in mind is that creative houses, advertising agencies, media buyers along with cable, satellite and network service providers are the intermediaries not the owners of the ad game. No matter how they may

posture, the essential connection is between the advertiser with his product or service and the viewer being wooed to be a consumer. Thus the perspective of this ‘support team’ must not be mistakenly substituted for the wishes of viewers and their advertisers. While the media may be needed to convey the message, the proof of the pudding will remain in the subsequent ‘tasting’, with advertising but one step along the way to validation and to gaining the trust of the consumer. For example, try to take a jar of Best Foods mayonnaise out of the hands of a housewife in a supermarket, you cannot! She will make it clear to you that it is ‘her’ mayonnaise and she will not surrender it to you on the basis of an argument that the generic brand at half the price is the same thing —though it may be. Herein is the essential ‘bonding’ connection the advertiser is trying to achieve vis-a-vis the consumer, with the wizards of the Silicon Valley, the gurus of Hollywood and the spin-doctors of Madison Avenue in place to help dress up and present the package.

The business question is how to manage the advertising information and data forms to create the ideal vehicle by which advertisers can connect with their public. Certainly a unification of advertising systems that supports new technology and improved art forms will make it far easier and more convenient to:

- Implement on-point on-the-fly ad insertions at the local head-end.

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*“...how to manage the advertising information and data forms to create the ideal vehicle by which advertisers can connect with their public.”*

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- Enable true interactivity across media platforms.
- Match up the context of ads with that of shows for a better result.
- Assemble ad pods that better attract and hold viewers.
- Improve advertising ROI with compelling calls to action.
- Enable real-time data tracking of TV advertising.
- Institute personalization in advertising as a way to raise CPMs.
- Allow brands to present a consistent message across platforms.
- Improve the effectiveness of TV advertising rating schemes.
- Organize multi-platform ad campaigns, and the like.

Yet it is most difficult to know what such new capabilities out of a unified advertising system may yield of real benefit to the TV business and its advertisers. Also where this may lead and what it may mean to enhanced TV, interactive TV and related models. Also to determine how modern TV advertising models can be made more effective in a DVR, DVD and VOD enabled time-shifting world, wherein each viewer has easy access to convenient ways to opt-out of most commercial messages. An analysis of these difficult questions faces much uncharted territory and is therefore likely to be short on comprehensiveness, balance and consistency. Indeed it will take much more input from various industry sources to flesh out a blueprint for the 'unification' of TV advertising. In the meantime we can only ponder

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how to connect the dots along the way.

To begin with, the primary objective of advertisers, their agencies and media buyers remains to place effective ads in their most suitable media slots, subject only to budget considerations. Therefore advertising unification must start from this perspective as the primary call to action of the advertiser to the media and the technologists. From this vantage point it follows that knowing which ads and what forms are likely to be most effective in various situations is critical. Also knowing when to pull an ad and replace it with a more suitable one is of importance. Thus having better more timely information and analysis readily at hand by which to anticipate the outcome and judge the actual result of

an advertisement has great appeal to this audience. But how is this to be accomplished? This begs the ungainly question as to what we really would do with far more, far better and more unified information, if only

we could get it. Herein we offer up some partial answers from an overall as well as an interactive/enhanced TV point of view. We also posit how advanced TV and computer technology and interactivity can be harnessed to this cause.

As better information and intelligence is fundamental to positioning products and services, more effective computer systems are needed. Such systems can then be used to target an audience with suitable advertising that gets the advertiser's message across. In this

regard the following are but a few of the technical objectives to be satisfied by an integrated ad system:

- To unify TV advertising information from dissimilar systems under one roof.
- To be able to measure TV advertising campaigns by target population.
- To project what various TV advertising forms might yield by demographic sector.
- To evolve improved metrics to measure actual impression counts.
- To contrast the efficacy of different TV advertising concepts and models.
- To raise the CPM value of various forms and genre of TV advertising.
- By genre or brand to better place advertising on selected networks and shows.
- To relate TV advertising to the actual buying habits of various target groups.

When some of these objectives are met the TV advertising industry may then proceed over time and at great expense to achieve additional breakthroughs, including:

- Systems to effectively match specific brands and ads to their most suitable media venues.
- Statistical methods by which to draw valid comparisons and contrasts among channels, timeslots, and genres.
- Sufficient pertinent data to determine a workable approximation of advertising cause and effect.
- An overall unified database to

establish seasonal and multiyear trend lines.

- A measure of the level of distraction experienced by viewers of ads under various circumstances in the home and in public places.
- By category a system to determine what TV advertising works best.
- A current knowledge base for the 'state of the art' of TV advertising.
- Ways to overcome the ad blocking effect of the DVR, DVD and Cell Phone.
- Means by which to recapture the youth audience away from the Game Platform.

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Overall such capabilities are based on better TV advertising technology that can enable improved ad placing, audience targeting, personalization, and a two-way flow between the TV audience and the commercial interests that serve it. To do these sorts of things it may be necessary to have a much greater degree of unification of electronic media advertising systems and technologies than exists or is even envisioned today. But how, and is this a practical undertaking?

**A**t this point it is important to be aware of the vastness of the enterprise that a unified TV advertising data system represents, and not to underestimate the complexity of all that is required to manage it effectively. Indeed many others have over the years thrown up their hands at the futility of dealing with all that is involved in comprehensively tracking

TV advertising and measurement. A centralized all-in-one IBM-like approach to a unified advertising database is sure to scare away most folks who have experience with what is involved in such a massive undertaking. However it is only natural that as technology progresses and database capabilities continue to grow on larger and larger systems and networks that the question as to whether this approach is possible or practical should come up again. In an overall sense to our way of thinking it is still early days for this to be a cost-effective way to globally manage TV advertising information.

Indeed a good deal can also be achieved and is being achieved every day by far less costly and complex subsystems and via the use of well-managed and effectively targeted focus groups and case studies. This begs the question as to whether a unified approach that is workable over many types of media technologies would indeed be of sufficient help to make the game worth the candle? Still we among many others may argue that within reasonable limits such an overall approach is likely to be useful and even cost effective today and a great big success down the road. This naturally leads to a discussion of how much to bite off and where to set the 'bridge to far' limit to such an endeavor — as in the SST supersonic airplane development that (perhaps) went a bit too far leaving the recently retired Concorde jetliner without an SST future or progeny. Here we have a

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common dilemma of advanced systems and large long-range projects, they often have ponderous early stages and a long road ahead. So Advertising Unification will not be easy. In the words of the old southern gospel song “Lord, you gave us a mountain!”

So where is a good beginning and how far should the industry go today? A good and practical starting point is to fully support the ANA Ad-ID system that is in the process of being implemented on a broad scale in the US. This new coding method for electronic advertising will tag every new ad by a participating organization with a unique code on the basis of which it can be tracked. This

institutionalization of the Ad-ID system to record whose ads appeared on what shows and on which channels on what dates in actual time sequence is in and of itself of great importance. Such a system should over time be

able to accurately record the useful aspects of all advertising events including who the advertisers were and the like. Here the extent to which such a system can and will be extended to include a great deal more will depend on the cost of creating and maintaining so very much information. All the while, this train is already on the track and rolling with CBS, NBC, ABC and others fully on board. There remains a need to agree on some overall industry-wide objectives if this capability is to have a real success. Otherwise the advertising industry may risk building a complex costly 'digital highway' leading to nowhere

(useful) in particular. This whole area makes for a lively discussion.

Beyond the basic information that most everyone will want to access, the puzzle as to what data to capture and store can get pretty hairy. For example, when commercial computer systems first sprouted their wings in the 1960s it was popular to suppose that large enough and fast enough computers running suitable 'relational' databases could be expanded to meet almost any need. Indeed IBM became the most valuable stock on Wall Street by pitching just this message, and we all bought into it. But it turned out that — with notable exceptions — the real world does not work well that way. Indeed it is the ability to get at the primary information we truly want and need that matters far more than having access to all the data about everything all of the time. This is particularly on point when we are already able to readily get the few data points we truly need by simpler means. As in comparing searching the many aisles of a Wal-Mart instead of making a quick stop at a local 7-Eleven for a tube of toothpaste.

**T**hus what we leave out, skip over, erase or simply ignore in our databanks is of great importance to the design of a good system. Of course this idea may in part negate the value of the all-in-one system solution except at a Pentagon, Visa, IRS or Citibank. Indeed it often pays to use far smaller subsystems when they are able to yield good enough

answers most of the time. Can you just hear the gnashing of teeth at such an idea among the database masters at Cisco, IBM and Oracle or even at Comcast? Yet the use of such 'fuzzy logic' shortcut methods is the way of the world. That is as opposed to the use of exact fully detailed results out of ideal but very expensive all-encompassing data systems. The collapse of the centrally planned Soviet system was in large part due to a failure to appreciate this very point. For it takes an awful lot of data to know what color shoes are best for 40-year-old matrons in Kazakhstan, so why not simply let her choose a pair at a local store (or head-end)? Thus as we ponder a unified advertising system we are on the horns of a dilemma. To accomplish many of the objectives and

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make way for the applications listed above we must, by design, avoid the pitfalls of excessive unneeded complexity, or we will surely fail.

The solution is in part connected to how we manage the information that is captured as part of each advertisement's database entry record — such as date, type, placement etc. A truly workable system solution can only really come about after we develop, test, trial, modify and test again and again a pilot system until it satisfies many of its users. In this evolutionary way we move by steps from the original system design in the direction of a unified advertising system solution — one that also evolves as the needs of advertisers change.

This approach should also yield the capability to aggregate the data, compute useful statistics and eliminate great quantities of extra or no longer needed data entries, so as not to clog up the databank — with extra data records that no longer contribute to the information needed by the busy advertising executive. For example, once one has established that the average American male of a certain demographic drinks 2.3 beers per day, then, subject only to periodical checks on this result, it makes no sense to collect more data on this matter. Yet this is how the database world is designed to work, i.e., once data fields have been defined, it just keeps capturing data that is seldom if ever used and it stores it into massive databanks few ever retrieve. Indeed the database world contains a vast sea of facts, but only a rare combination of these facts can lead to an idea or a practical use, so much of the rest can be safely discarded — if it is organized and done by design.

To the extent that such realizations resonate with the practical side of creating a massive electronic media advertising system, they may lead us naturally in the direction of a market-driven unified advertising system design that is somewhat more limited. A real-world approach that is naturally suspicious of purely theoretical musings of computer scientists — many of whom have seldom been exposed to practical systems or to much daylight. For any system design can easily grow out of control to encompass

scores of variables representing different attributes and characteristics, while capturing all such data in the vain hope of someday figuring out what it may mean is just wasteful. Ad hoc limited studies that project the importance of such variables via such things as multivariate analysis, methods of least squares, the calculus of variations and the like are much better at the task of sorting through mountains of data looking for a few precious stones.

**W**henver new data fields are found to be useful they can be added to the data structure of the overall information system. Similarly, data fields that are found to serve little or no purpose can be dropped. Of course this means that old records may not be of use for certain purposes and that

new records may no longer contain information that at some later date turns out to be of interest. Yet overall, via such a process the system can move toward a cost-effective unification of advertising that is of real benefit to the majority of practitioners of the advertising arts. For example, how useful is it to capture package size related data on a product being advertised? Say by drawing a distinction between tablets, pills or capsules in recording the individual entries of a headache remedy advertising campaign? If well-designed studies show that it is of merit, then fine continue to capture this information as it is of value. If not drop it. This is quite a controversial

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point many will argue with, on the basis that you can never know in advance what information may be of value in the future. Nonsense, as a cost-to-benefit approach is mandatory to keep the thing manageable — or else your garage and mine would be stacked to the ceiling with all the stuff we've ever owned. Is it?

The reason for a good deal of selectivity in what is captured in a unified advertising system is simply the practical necessity of keeping the information system within a manageable size. The exponential growth in combinatorial terms of data masses as the number of fields is expanded can quickly lead to astronomical quantities of data. Like sand on the beach, all detailed information concerning electronic advertising need not be recorded or counted. Instead only that which is essential needs to be recorded for posterity, the rest can be recorded and analyzed on a spot 'sampling' basis as needed. This selection process can lead to difficulty, as what is needed is so very dependent on the applications in use.

In this context here is a listing of the kind of information that can be organized within a unified advertising system, in the form of data about:

- The brand, product or service.
- The Ad-ID and other codes.
- The elements of the ad itself.
- The media form of the ad.
- The metadata attached to the ad.
- The advertiser and the ad

campaign.

- The advertising agency and media buyers.
- The genre of the ad, its style and its form.
- Rules for placement of the ad including media, channels, shows etc.
- The demographics of the target audience.
- The frequency, timing and context of use.
- The touch points the ad is to avoid or to choose.
- Feedback data to be collected from viewers and services providers.
- Linkage of the ad to previous ads for the same product or service.
- The purpose of the ad — branding, flag waving, call for action etc.
- Historic record of the ad and ad campaign.
- Statistical results on ad placements and key summary data.
- Technical interoperability and other data for multi-platform use.
- The rules of engagement including its timeline.
- Financial information, CPMs and other cost data.

As this information ranges from the very specific to the broadly generic and from the very private to what can become public domain, it will be necessary to institute the unified advertising system within a full multi-tiered digital rights management or DRM system in order to protect everyone's rights. Within such a framework, some of the information can be made broadly accessible, while the rest is highly restricted so that it

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*"...creating a massive electronic media advertising system, they may lead us naturally in the direction of a market-driven unified advertising system ..."*

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can only be accessed by a tightly controlled few. Within a properly designed relational database this should not pose a problem. In this manner advertising information about (say) 2-door coupe automobiles can range over the advertising placed by a GM, Ford, DaimlerChrysler, Honda and Toyota without risking the violation of corporate privacy. Also information about the placement of the ad or related ads on the PC or the PDA can also be aggregated and overall statistics drawn.

One way to proceed and to get a handle on what data forms and fields will be required is to compare what is needed for a number of major systems such as:

- Broadcast TV
- Standard Cable or Satellite TV
- Premium Cable or Satellite TV
- Pay-Per-View or VOD on Cable or Satellite TV
- TV on a PC or a Laptop
- Broadband on a PC or a Laptop
- Enhanced TV and Interactive TV
- Cell Phone or PDA
- Out of the Home (OOH) Screens
- DVD Players
- LAN or MAN Networks

This can be followed by a consideration of the fields required for various kinds of applications on these systems such as:

- Entertainment

- News
- Sports
- e-Commerce
- Interactive TV applications such as Gaming
- Multi-screen applications, like PIP
- Split-screen applications as in CNN
- DVR, DVD and similar 'trick-play' platforms
- VoIP communications GUIs

The overall conclusion is that heading in the direction of Advertising Unification of forms, data and systems is indeed desirable. In time such an outcome is probably inevitable. Yet, it will require a thoughtful appreciation of the pitfalls to be avoided as well as

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an astute ability to design the overall system for user convenience, system efficiency and overall functionality in a manner that can readily be modified and adapted to future needs and opportunities. As such

it will require the full input and cooperation of the ANA, the AAAA and the ITA as well as the NCTA, the NAB and other media and computer organizations. This is but the beginning of a new age of electronic media advertising. Have fun with it.

(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 and greg@ad-assoc.com)

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—Georgia Pech, Editor]

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## **KALSOW'S BACK-CHANNEL: *"Validating the Middle Ground"***

■ Keep high speed Internet or broadband unregulated (and out of the hands of rule makers at the FCC and at the Department of Commerce) so say the cable gatekeepers as they plead for protection from the US Supreme Court. That is the clarion call of the NCTA with the FCC acting as counsel and the Department of Justice as pro bono attorney appealing the US Supreme to overturn a lower court ruling that, heaven forbid, might open up cable's pipe to open market Internet commerce. While the case in question concerns the right of Internet Service Providers and others to offer information services over cable's 'private' fiber network, this is about an even bigger issue. What is at stake here is also ORCA™ or Open Revenue Channel Access for free market commerce over cable. Unfortunately the convoluted language of the attorneys makes it hard to know what is really going on — as they argue case law regarding the right of the FCC to regulate information flows as well as voice communications. It amazes me to hear conservative voices covet legal protection for what amounts to monopoly even as they also preach the blessings of a 'free market'. In truth this case represents a major milestone on the road to the communications world of the future, whose passing may greatly impact future business and commerce in various unknown ways. It seems to us that cable may even be opening up a large self inflicted wound, as winning this case may lend great support to such powerful competitors as Verizon, who are looking to run their own fiber into every home and office in America. At the NCTA they seem at times a bit tied up with knots of their own making, so lets forgive them — as they may not fully know what they do.

■ The end of Moore's Law, which states that computer power will double every eighteen months or so, may finally be upon us. This would mean that additional power on PCs, networks and set-top boxes is likely to cost a lot more than expected in the future. Both Intel and Advanced Micro Devices, the two largest producers of microprocessors for computers and other electronic devices, have each just announced that computer speed is no longer the measure they will focus on. Instead the effectiveness and productivity of the whole system is where they intend to place the emphasis. This seems a bit disingenuous from the very folks who always marketed their products mainly on the basis of computer speed. In truth by indirection this appears to be a blatant admission that the game has changed and that they can no longer raise their computer bus speeds as before, probably due to the fact that limitations based on the laws of physics have gotten in their way. If true, then the opportunity to go far beyond what is now possible on TV set-top boxes, the Internet, game boxes and the like regarding video, broadband, VoIP and other media may have reached costly limitations much sooner than expected.

■ How much further can ESPN expand its 25-year-old brand and continue to raise its fees to cable and satellite operators? A whole lot more we dare say. Talk about sports as an a la carte offering, what the male population watches is sports and more sports – young and old that is what they want to watch. In today’s bad news world what better escape is there than baseball, football, basketball, hockey and lots of sports talk? Some might think that Fox Sports, Madison Square Garden along with the Major Leagues’ own offerings may yet supplant ESPN and save the day for the ‘poor’ operator. Not likely, as ESPN still has the magic formula and the brand power – so forget it. In an on-demand world where content is threatening to replace networks in importance, the likes of HBO and ESPN continue to run strongly upstream. Consumers buy convenience and predictability and they always will, so they will continue to buy McDonald hamburgers and ESPN. So while the new programming at Fox Sports will surely gain an audience for Max and their other stars, look to ESPN to just keep rolling along for old Disney, and sports as a genre to continue to grow in importance. Especially with the dramatic improvement in the experience now available via High Definition TV and other new technologies. As to movies competing with sports? Yes, but the DVD player is rapidly taking a large portion of that genre away from cable and satellite TV – even when VOD is included.

■ From the Wire: To those who are just getting used to WiFi, look for 802.11m to obsolete your 802.11 a, b and g investments real soon... Secure e-mail once you have installed Microsoft’s Windows XP Service Pack 2 you say? You may pray for email security, yet many experts continue to doubt it as insecurity for all seems the dominant trend, at least for now... Look for copyright issues to get more and more confusing as file-sharing is attacked and also defended by sensible folks on both sides of a widening abyss.

[Your mileage may vary. –RGK]

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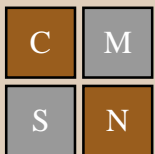
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**Silicon Valley: +1.831.427.3833**

**So. California: +1.949.584.0989**



CMS NewsLine  
Alvairi-Derfler Associates  
Lake Forest, CA 92630  
Tel: +1.949.584.0989  
www.ad-assoc.com  
newsline@ad-assoc.com

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