



HOW TO STAND OUT FROM THE ADTECH CROWD

INTRODUCTION

It is over a hundred years since the Philadelphia retailer John Wanamaker famously said: “Half the money I spend on advertising is wasted; the trouble is, I don’t know which half.” Recently, the [ISBA](#) published a report that claimed 15% of programmatic advertiser spend was lost to an “unknown delta”, demonstrating that the measurement, trust and attribution issues that Wanamaker identified all those years ago are still with us. Meanwhile, commentators are predicting a rocky road ahead for the advertising industry. According to MarketingWeek, UK [digital ad spend will decline for the first time ever this year.](#)

If you’re an adtech vendor it’s not easy to stand out from the crowd: for instance, visitors to DMEXCO’s digital event will see scores of companies with very similar looking solutions. And yet it’s not all doom and gloom: technology has the potential to provide increased profitability and at the same time meet Wanamaker’s transparency issues head-on.

So, if you’re a vendor in the adtech space, your challenge is to demonstrate to customers and industry commentators how your solutions can help buck the decline in ad spend and address the long-standing transparency concerns.

This report looks at the best way to meet these challenges and help adtech vendors stand out from the crowd.

We talked to some of the most influential media, analyst and vendor players in the industry to understand the most significant communications challenges that adtech companies face today, including:

- Creating meaningful differentiators
- Presenting complex products in the simplest way
- Being seen as a recognised and trusted voice
- Addressing common misconceptions and getting key messages across

We’d like to thank all the contributors for their valuable input. Many commented that they had not been asked about their experiences before and we’re pleased to be able to share their insights here.

It’s crucial for adtech companies to stand out from the crowd. To do this, they must present themselves with a unique voice and speak about the issues that are shaping advertising. The best technologies, presented well, will undoubtedly win out.

Please drop us a line if you’d like to discuss any of the points in this report.



Paul Davies
Account Director



David Lawrence
Managing Director

1 BE PART OF THE INDUSTRY CONVERSATION

If you were to walk around the NAB Show (the major global broadcast technology trade show) last year you would have counted at least 17 companies that were offering a server-side ad insertion (SSAI) product. As described by one leading adtech analyst, "the biggest challenge is standing out from the crowd."



Many companies tend to see the world through the lens of their own product. But we're a relatively mature industry now and companies don't need to oversell. They need to take a more worldly view and build a trusted brand by demonstrating an awareness of what the broader challenges for their customers are.

- Vincent Flood, Editor & Managing Director at Video Ad News.

"Leaders need to be perceived as being a participant in the wider industry," said Vincent Flood. "It's crucial that any comms activity demonstrates that a company has a finger on the pulse of what's going on. If you're a new entrant to the market you can benefit hugely from being adjacent to the big established players who have spent many years, sometimes decades, in building up their brand."

He continued: "Similarly, larger and more established companies can quickly be forgotten about - to the point where people start to ask if the company still exists - when they fail to maintain visibility. There are always more hungry competitors on the horizon who will continue to make noise."

John Moulding, editor at Videonet, described his relationship with a leading demand-side platform: "I get high level access to spokespeople, but ultimately their marketing works because it serves an industry purpose."

Vincent Flood echoed this point, saying: "There are a thousand problems that their clients have. If they just speak to those, people will associate them with being someone who can help solve problems."

"I know what the problems in the market are and vendors must be able to address them," said Moulding.

It's important for companies to be part of a wider industry narrative. That means working out a story that goes above product, identifying clearly why audiences will care and focusing on the right topics that will cut through.

How strategic comms can help you be part of the industry conversation

- **Messaging**
Getting brand and product messaging right is so important to how your company presents itself. Creating compelling messaging is crucial to ensuring your business is presented in an audience-focused way.
- **Analyst relations and competitor research**
Where does your company and its products fit in the overall marketplace? What are your competitors saying and what are they investing in?
- **Influencer relations and social media**
Your employees are experts in their fields. Could their expertise be made more visible, and are they connected to the right people?



TAKE A STRATEGIC APPROACH TO RELATIONSHIP BUILDING

"We frequently come across video ad tech companies that we've never heard of. Sometimes they have been in the video advertising space for years and they've never reached out once and hardly anyone has ever heard of them," said Vincent Flood.

The top editors and analysts speak to senior figures in the industry every day, including key decision makers within your target customers, competitors and other companies in the adtech ecosystem that might partner with you.

Making contact with them is one thing, but building meaningful relationships takes time and effort. It's important to use your resources in the right way. One leading editor commented that "someone on the comms side might take you for lunch and try to butter you up, but it only works if it's an authentic relationship where they're actually communicating good stuff."

This last comment is at the heart of building meaningful relationships in adtech. As Vincent Flood said, "companies could succeed so much more quickly if they took their sales hats off and realised they'll actually sell more if they provide value to the reader." It's important that you provide the right content and frame stories in the right way for the target audience.



It's so very beneficial for a provider (to build strong relationships). It's not just for the immediate benefits but also the continual benefits for someone in the industry advocating for issues that are favourable to your cause.

- Colin Dixon, nScreen Media.



John Moulding highlighted an example of relationship-building done well: “One company sent a spokesperson to spend two hours with me; they were deeply involved in the product development and a new go-to-market strategy. They got more PR over a three year period as a result, because I understood – at a much deeper level – what they did.”

This example highlights the importance of getting your message across in the most effective way. In adtech, where products can often be highly complex, taking the time to make sure your offering is clearly understood can make a big difference.

On the benefits of developing a clear understanding, Colin Dixon from nScreen Media said: “because they educated me, I wrote about it.”

How strategic comms can help you build and nurture the right relationships

- **Media and analyst relations**
Identify the key people in your field and build strategic relationships. Become a useful contact by helping to inform their understanding of key trends and technologies.
- **Influencer relations**
Leading voices in the industry often build a platform for themselves on online channels such as LinkedIn. Are your audiences seeing your company there?
- **Content strategy**
It's important to form a plan that ensures a regular flow of content to maintain visibility. Key messages must be repeated to ensure they cut through.
- **Event support (including virtual)**
One-on-one briefings make a big difference to building relationships, whether in person or conducted virtually. Make sure that spokespeople are well prepared. And that briefings are followed up with relevant online content or demos.



DEVELOP COMMUNICATIONS THAT CUT THROUGH

John Moulding at Videonet said that, “a challenge in adtech is that in many solution categories, everyone appears, on the surface, to do the same thing.” In this environment it's vital to clearly define the differences between seemingly similar technologies.

Messaging in adtech can often lack clarity and there tends to be too much jargon. As a result, misconceptions can easily develop. It is critical that companies ensure this doesn't happen to them.



Vendors need a well-chosen spokesperson using human language. Few editors will say they don't understand something, they don't want to look stupid. It's up to the vendor to get their point across in layman terms

- John Moulding, Videonet

"Vendors need to come across as credible," said John Moulding.

"I quickly get a sense of what's real or not: is it all bluster, or is it real engineering and honest?"

Colin Dixon went further, saying: "Somebody was talking about scalability of the ads but when I pressed them on how they were dealing with it they didn't have a very solid solution behind it."

Product messaging must be developed and articulated in a way that editors and analysts understand. After all, you are relying on them to translate your key messages to a sizable audience of potential customers. Advertising technologies can be incredibly complex, but you need to make sure your messages are being related clearly and concisely.

How strategic comms can help you build the right comms strategy

- **Customer and media surveys**
How are your company and products perceived by the wider industry? What do your customers really think, and are your key messages getting across?
- **Brand and messaging strategy**
What's the state of the marketplace you're in and where is it heading in 3, 6, 12 months? What key issues do your products address? What is your brand's purpose in the industry? What do your audiences care about? Look in depth at what competitors are saying. What are their strengths and weaknesses? Use the answers to develop a unique voice for yourself.
- **Media training**
Presenting well in a boardroom does not translate to success in a media interview. You must be prepared to brief editors and analysts in a clear and concise way and be ready to engage in genuine dialogue.



DEVELOP A LONG-TERM CONTENT STRATEGY

For many adtech companies, a sales cycle can last anywhere from two months to two years. It's important that your company remains front of mind throughout.

"One company I deal with has a regular newsletter and gives me a heads up on their pipeline," said John Moulding. Utilising owned media in the form of blogs and newsletters is a simple way to stay connected to sales leads too.

A well-planned content strategy is essential in delivering effective communications, not least when committing to a blog and planning regular and meaningful posts. Kevin Hunt, SVP Global Marketing at SpotX explained the thinking behind the company re-launching its blog.

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There were four reasons why we re-launched the blog: 1, to drive thought leadership; 2, to promote our product; 3, to aid expansion by promoting our culture and technology; 4, for joint marketing with customers and partners to promote our work.

To promote it we send a monthly SpotXtra email to our database and use social media, aligning our global team on messaging. No ads, it's all organic. We now have a timeline of events for digital connections.

- Kevin Hunt, SpotX

Tracking digital connections in this way can be incredibly valuable as they allow you to form direct links between communications and sales. It's important that you get sales teams feeding into your content strategy to make sure you're producing content that helps fuel customer conversations.

A well-planned content strategy that speaks to your target audience goes hand-in-hand with the other recommendations in this report. It's central to presenting your key messages directly to customers, both through owned and earned outputs, and directly supports developing meaningful media relationships.

Hunt summed up the impact of such an approach: "Ultimately these activities lead to an increase in sales leads."

How strategic comms can help you build and nurture sales relationships

- **Owned, earned and paid media**
Ensure you maintain visibility with an integrated communications strategy.
- **Content strategy**
Plan out your content calendar. Ensure you speak to industry concerns. Focus on maintaining relevance to the topics your audiences care about. Don't oversell!
- **Social media**
Your employees are highly respected experts in their fields, but are they connected to the right people? Make it easier for them to share insight.
- **Events (including virtual)**
Events take up a lot of time and resources. Don't waste opportunities by putting forward spokespeople who have not been sufficiently prepped. Are media and analysts able to access the materials they need to tell your story? If you're not meeting them in person then can they get what they need online? Are you creating opportunities for two-way engagement?



COMMUNICATIONS IMPERATIVES IN ADTECH

The comments from leading industry figures in this report reveal significant communications challenges in adtech. They also highlight important opportunities for companies to stand out. Here are our top recommendations for successful communications:

1

Get your message right

Do your homework and find your own unique voice. Make sure your message is focused on your audiences. Refresh it to stay relevant.

2

Build the right relationships

Invest in meaningful relationships: take the time to brief the people that matter on the key areas that your company is addressing. Look for ways to become a trusted source of insight.

3

Be part of the industry conversation

Make sure your company is visible and has a voice on industry trends. Show that what you do has impact and relevance.

4

Keep your company front of mind

Generating leads is the easy bit; you must continue to feed your sales pipeline with meaningful content over the long term.

We'd love to hear your experiences and talk more about our work in adtech, building brands and driving sales through effective communications. Please drop us a line at

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For more information visit:
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FURTHER RESOURCES

The New World of Tech Communications

Events and conferences act as the drumbeat of the technology industry's calendar, driving everything from product development to sales. With major events including DMEXCO, Mobile World Congress, NAB Show, SXSW, E3 and IBC being cancelled, or going virtual, the landscape has totally changed. Combined with changing business and market priorities, this has meant plans for every aspect of marketing are having to be continually re-assessed.

In anticipation of an ongoing need to leverage on-line/virtual events, Platform asked leading journalists and analysts for their views on how technology companies have dealt with communications during the pandemic and what they want more/less of in future. The "New World of Tech Communications" report is designed to help marketing and communications leaders plan their next steps.

The research identifies:

- How well technology companies have dealt with communications during the pandemic
- Trends in the volume and perceived quality of news
- If leading influencers are getting the content they want
- How virtual events can better serve the needs of media and analysts

The free report is available to download at:

<https://www.platformcomms.com/the-new-world-of-tech-communications/>



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