

# ATL and digital strategists to integrate, not isolate

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Neither traditional nor digital media should be seen in isolation in advertising and media strategy, and neither should these media streams be planned or bought as such. Both need to sit around the same table, albeit virtually, to secure strategic integrity and seamless campaign integration.



Above-the-line (ATL) strategists and digital specialists must work together from the initial client briefing, right until the end results are achieved. When these two worlds of experience and focus combine, brand managers and marketers are enabled to break their brands or companies into new and exciting future territories.

This 'merged imperative' is the result of the reality that digital strategists that have been introduced to the market, operate as specialists from SEO to paid to social media, etc. and often only focus on one digital offering. Comparatively traditional ATL strategists have had to focus on multi-channels, which has made them lateral thinkers, when answering a brief.

Add to that reality the ever-evolving media environment and subsequent evolution occurring in media offerings, whether a radio station now offering digital display on their station websites, to the changing social media or digital opportunities constantly being added to their repertoire.

Realistically, all strategists are acutely aware that the environment in which a person in a designated audience consumes their media is very important to the chance of their advertising being received, even well received. However, each brings a different perspective to the table. For example, digital strategists understand that not everyone wants to be served a banner advertisement when they are reading their newsfeed or blog on their favourite website. Whereas an ATL strategist can answer this reality effectively by adding TV or cinema to the mix, where the target audience is more relaxed, captive, and open to the same advertisement.

It is therefore not about a 'neither/nor' or 'either/or' but about bringing open minded collaboration to the fore.

Due to the different career learning paths and channels of measured performance of ATL versus digital strategists, it is more important than ever for them to work together to make the most of each media opportunity for their clients, says Paul Middleton, managing director of integrated agency Ebony+Ivory. "Our strategists and specialists work together well as they learn from each other to build successful 360 integrated campaigns."

“It’s a bit like making a wheel turn smoothly. What is tantamount to the success of any marketing campaign is that everyone understands each specialist’s function (spoke) and how their spoke fits into that wheel and how, without that spoke, the wheel does not turn properly and efficiently at the speed it should and that the bicycle won’t get there how and when it should,” he adds.

Each platform or medium has its advantages and disadvantages, and by putting everyone at the same table from the onset, these strengths or weaknesses can be ironed out quickly, and a solution achieved faster and more cost effectively. Middleton explains further that thinking out of the box then also becomes morphed into thinking together, leveraging one media with another, and making the campaign stronger and more effective than ever, both cost effectively and efficiently.

Both traditional (ATL) and digital have their limitations. From more of an optimist’s perspective, these specialist fields offer specific opportunities to marketers, he says. The more each team member understands these, the better strategy can be conventionalised to make a campaign that leverages the client’s budget to the best of its ability, using the advantages of both media as integrated campaigns to maximise reach of the designated target audience at the best return on investment (ROI).

Ebony+Ivory is passionate about ensuring that its clients’ marketing briefs are answered, diligently and professionally through integration media choices that not only reach, but appeal to the target audience. “We are constantly keeping up with industry trends, training our staff, and making sure we bring the best opportunities to the table for our clients’ brands,” concludes Middleton.

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