

**TODAY'S COMMENTARY by Jack Myers**  
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**Jack Myers Media Business Report**  
**Creative Agencies Must Focus on New Media & Emotional Connections**

Media Planners Forcing Strategic Upgrades to Creative Output

"For all the furor about convergence, and new technologies and opportunities, we need to converge on one idea: making emotional connections with people," comments Kevin Roberts, global chairman of Saatchi & Saatchi, in his new best-selling advertising book, *Sisomo: Creating Emotional Connections in the Market with Sight, Sound and Motion*. Perianne Grignon, VP Media Services for Sears Roebuck and Company, acknowledged last year to *Jack Myers Media Business Report*, "for us, reach is not something we value as much as an emotional connection to a property."

Emotional connections are emerging as the foundation of the reinvention of marketing, a process Procter & Gamble chairman A.G. Laffley called for when he urged the marketing industry to "reinvent the way we market to consumers. We need to get going now," he said. In the two years that have passed since Laffley's speech, marketers, agencies and media sellers have accelerated their new media initiatives, launched custom research tools, and, most importantly, embraced the reality of change. Yet, the industry moves inexorably toward another traditional Upfront marketplace and business models in place since the 1960s continue to thrive. Within two years, however, we are likely to look back at the 2006/2007 Upfront as the last of the relatively traditional negotiations. Even this year new issues have emerged that make the Upfront look anything but traditional to those immersed in day-to-day realities.

While broadband, multi-platform, on-demand and wireless are the focus of conference panels, trade publication headlines, Upfront presentations and even Upfront negotiations, there is actually limited available inventory to fulfill the new demand. Good ideas are in demand but supply is also limited. More critically, agencies' creative output for new media applications remains in the Assembly Line Age. Roberts' Saatchi & Saatchi is one of only a handful of agencies that are making integration of new media realities a centerpiece of their own brand focus. BBDO's *One Second Theater* for General Electric is a good, but rare, example of forward agency and client thinking. Leading TV networks and media agencies are incorporating new media technologies in their offerings, but only a few creative agencies have joined the bandwagon. Video advertising cannot be created in a media neutral vacuum but must be customized to reflect the unique aspects of each screen. Commercial design, commercial length and message composition all need to respond to new media opportunities.

For traditional network buys, media agencies are suggesting a transition to some form of minute-by-minute commercial ratings, but media sellers are being asked to absorb full responsibility for whether audiences stay tuned-in to view commercials; there is no plan at this time for a currency that establishes creative accountability. Such a currency is an inevitable outcome of current trends.

Commercials that enhance a network and/or program brand might earn discounts; others that lose ratings or diminish the surrounding environment would require premium payments or could be eliminated as an advertiser.

The primary goal of most TV campaigns for the past 50 years has been simple awareness. The primary measure of performance has been commercial exposure, with a secondary measurement of message recall. Only direct response ads and infomercials have been held to a higher standard based on actual response. As marketers focus on beyond reach, awareness and recall to emphasize "emotional connections" defined through environment, engagement and responsiveness, their objectives must be applied across multiple platforms with new media *and* creative solutions.

Internet advertising campaigns are at the leading edge of integration of media and creative decision-making. "Especially in Internet buying it's critical to have creative with media," says Ian Lurie, CEO of Seattle-based Portent Interactive. "We need to deliver messages that are not only pretty but functional and compelling. The cleverest most creative copy doesn't do anything if it doesn't make sense to the audience." The same issue applies to advertising on all video screens.

Yet, in traditional television, the vast majority of commercial messages are neither functional nor compelling. In defense of creative agencies, their charge has traditionally been to create commercials that score high recall. As marketers embrace the new Myers Five Dimensions of Advertising Effectiveness, they are asking media planners to refocus media schedules away from awareness and recall and toward generating different levels of emotional connection. They need to communicate the same objectives to creative agencies.

An equally pressing issue for creative agencies is the growing penetration of high definition and digital video recorders. There are few images more noticeable to high def viewers than a large screen image suddenly going from 12x9 ratio to a shrunken 4x3 ratio commercial. When watching quality sports and entertainment programming in high definition, analog commercials are especially obvious and some are even laughable in their visible lack of production quality. Make-up artists have yet to master the reality of high definition, resulting in actors with pasty white make-up that turns would-be beauties into frighteningly pale ghosts (watch *Cold Case* for evidence). Brands, especially high tech brands, that fail to realize this (and there are many) are doing themselves and the networks that air their commercials a disservice.

Similarly, advertisers have yet to take even the most-simple steps to adapt to the presence of digital video recorders. When will marketers add bold logos and/or their URL for the full 30-second commercial so viewers can identify the advertiser even in fast-forward mode? In the broadband world, media sellers are exploring new models and avoiding the replication of current models. "On our broadband site, I'll refuse to create traditional commercial pods," says E! CEO Ted Harbert. "Let's not replicate the same system. Advertisers will pay the price for special environments." Yet, marketers are not yet investing in creative specially developed for these new environments, and the majority of online video commercials remain simply shortened versions of 30-second originals.

In the next 12-months, cable and satellite operators will ramp up their VOD, HD and digital marketing initiatives, driving increased penetration of advanced set-top boxes. With these boxes, consumers will be more likely to add DVR capabilities as well, meaning a far higher percentage of homes will have both HD and DVR in at least one TV set in the home. While some forecasters argue consumer adoption of DVR technology has been slow, penetration in the next 36-months will be dramatic. It will be imperative that creative competencies improve and that media and creative departments work in closer collaboration. Media sellers will also be under added pressure to add agency creative groups to the growing list of outreach initiatives they are required to maintain.

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