

WHY PARTNERSHIPS ARE AS IMPORTANT AS EVER IN ADVERTISING

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Published on December 18, 2017.

Looking around the ad industry these days it's easy to get discouraged. Advertising, once a mighty cultural force, is not that today. It's a hard reality that advertising has become a series of pop-up ads and annoyances that disrupt and even ruin our content viewing experience.

Over the past decade or so, the pendulum has swung dramatically—from sustained and classic marketing campaigns with jingles that still resonate in our minds to marketing messages targeted (and sometimes even generated) by machines fed into other machines and ultimately shoved in front of as many people as possible, as many times as possible.

Tantalized by the efficiency of these new machines and programmatic technologies we've almost adopted a Ron Popeil-esque attitude to advertising—"just set it, and forget it!"

We've lost touch with our consumers and we've cluttered the experience. We've moved away from brand engagements that are built on trust and transparency which deliver real impact over long periods of time. They've been replaced by middlemen, platforms, and machines. We've gone away from developing the next great on ramps to better consumer experiences and done what's easy and cheap.

We must look to reinvest human capital back into transformational partnerships, ones facilitated by technology but not wholly driven by it.

Consider sports, for example. Today, it's not just about the action happening on the field or on the court, but also about the drama happening in the locker room, all of the jockeying in the offseason, what sneaker fans' favorite athletes do and do not wear, and so on. It's as much about lifestyle as it is about the game.

Sports are always-on endeavors and ones that transcend generations. When you think of Michael Jordan in the 1990s, you're apt to also think about his hair-brained McDonald's commercials with Larry Bird. When you think of March Madness, you may also remember Capital One's hilarious "Steaks on a Plane" commercial with Samuel L. Jackson, Spike Lee and Charles Barkley.

Marketers that embrace this approach see the most value. Breakthrough creative ideas can only be formed through true partnerships, ones manically focused on connecting with people on a deeper, emotional level. As famed creative director Bill Bernbach once said, "Good advertising does not just circulate information. It penetrates the public mind with desires and belief." Has a

programmatic ad ever done that?

How marketers effectively put that into practice within sports provides a solid blueprint for how the industry can begin to return to its partnership roots. Here are a few considerations.

Embrace the Culture & Opt into the Fandom



Credit: Turner Ignite

Marketing is a treacherous endeavor these days. Every brand is one bad tweet away from going viral and getting mired in crisis communications. Dropping in unannounced during cultural moments may seem like a stellar marketing tactic, but it more often confuses your audience and can lead to unsavory blowback.

This is particularly true in sports, where emotions run high among fan bases for specific leagues, specific teams, and, of course, specific players. But any brand can be right for a property if they truly embrace the culture. For example, car insurance may not come to mind when thinking about competitive esports. Yet, GEICO has had a multiyear investment as one of the largest brand proponents of the sport, adopting the tone and culture of the community from early on. The young millennial esports fan is likely in, or soon to be in, the market for a car. It's actually a perfect fit.

There are plenty of examples where brands fail at this. Some parachute in with repurposed TV creative. Others barge into a consumer's feed through paid placement, or employ tone-deaf marketing that leads to little reaction from a community, sports or otherwise.

A true partnership means embracing the culture of the property or media when shaping your brand's message. If a marketer saw value in investing spend in the property in the first place, it only makes sense to maximize that return with a higher level of authenticity.

AdAge

Invest in Creative

While technology and automation have subsumed the transactional side of things, we've only scratched the surface of the kinds of production technology that can create amazing content and ad experiences.

It used to take several months of conference calls, way too much money, and a small army of agencies and middlemen just to shoot a national brand spot. Over the past decade the cost to develop custom messaging has gone way down and high-quality video is much less expensive to create. Brands also do not have to go through multiple touchpoints to get a campaign off the ground with an athlete or celebrity; they just need the right media partner.

And, emerging technologies like virtual reality are providing new creative avenues for brands to explore. Imagine not just having your brand's logo appear on a screen during a time-out, but being able to bring a marketing campaign to life within a fully immersive VR experience.

Trust in Advertising

If all the headlines about the brand safety issues afflicting the digital marketplace have taught us anything, it's that trust—not just reach—is the ultimate currency.

The most transformational sports partnerships have been powered by brands and media partners that trust one another. Within the course of that relationship, there

will be many successes, but also many failures. There will be experiments that pay off, and others that may not. But, at the end of the day it's about making sure that all stakeholders have skin in the game and come out ahead together.

We've forgotten this somewhat. Trust between partners used to be built up by simply delivering ratings points and GRPs. Today fan and consumer engagement matter more than just tonnage and reach.

The value of that cannot—and should not—be judged by outdated metrics, rather on the trust provided by being an always-on service to brands.

ABOUT ^{turner}ignite

Turner Ignite is focused on reimagining advertising. Powered by unrivaled branded content services, data-rich ad targeting capabilities, first-of-its kind social optimization tools and global distribution, Turner Ignite empowers brands to build more meaningful connections with consumers and drive return on investment at scale. The business unit is backed by Turner's wide-scale audience of diverse fans within its portfolio properties, including leading media brands Adult Swim, Boomerang, Cartoon Network, CNN, Great Big Story, HLN, SuperDeluxe, TBS, TNT, truTV, Bleacher Report and Turner Sports' high-profile coverage of the NBA, Major League Baseball, NCAA Division I Men's Basketball Championship, ELEAGUE, UEFA and professional golf. In addition, the company has digital sales partnerships with the NBA, NCAA and PGA.