

Attribution: An Idea Whose Time Has (Finally) Come?

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*Advertisers face issues ranging from ad fraud to transparency to brand safety, impacting their ability to ascertain whether campaigns are actually driving sales. That's why attribution is the single most emerging critical topic in the industry, and the focus of the **Attribution Accelerator Conference** on October 12 in NYC. **Alice Sylvester**, Partner, **Sequent Partners**, and a speaker at the event, talks to*

Cynopsis about what she says "will always be a work in progress."

Cynopsis: How long do you think the industry has to get attribution right?

Alice Sylvester: The industry has forever to get it right. No one

will axe it. It took a decade for marketing mix models to be refined. That's sort of like asking how long does astronomy have to be accepted – it will always be a work in progress.

The promise is too great. Especially when we talk about MTA (multi-touch attribution). User/ household level data across addressable and non-addressable channels is a mouthwatering morsel. And everyone acknowledges that the data hurdles are significant. There seems to be a lot of acceptance of less-than-perfect data solutions along the way as people learn about the methods.

Cynopsis: What took so long to get a sense of urgency?

Sylvester: The data wasn't there. It's almost there now. And the techniques for stitching datasets together have only now reached some level of acceptability in the industry. There has been dissatisfaction with MMM (marketing-mix models) for a while, now, but we haven't had the alternative that solves this problem until about now.

The data issues are more complicated than in marketing mix modeling. There, the data was about getting the data in the same market. In Attribution, they need data from the same person, which is more difficult, with privacy concerns and everything.

Cynopsis: How far has attribution come since last year's event?

Sylvester: Integrated/unified MMM and Attribution solutions are becoming more common than they were last year. We see MMM providers using attribution and vice versa. This begins to open the door to unified strategic and tactical decisioning. All of the major digital attribution providers now recognize that they need

to integrate offline inputs and outputs – and the consumer baseline.

Acquisitions are another thing that has changed since last year's event. Google ingesting Adometry, turning it into Google Analytics, Convertro being injected into AOL and Nielsen's recent announcement about VisuallQ. There's a lot of money and resources coming into the field.

Cynopsis: What will be the hottest topics at this year's event?

Sylvester: C-Suite – they're excited and enticed but terrified – it's new, it's got to work, but it is high risk, and complex; and there's not enough transparency in the process.

Marketers will talk about what's working and barriers they're encountering: issues in data quality and completeness (walled gardens, no visibility into consumer activity on Facebook, Google, Amazon result in a lack of connectivity across digital).

Practitioners – People will talk about why advertisers are confused by the vast array of statistical techniques; which are best for which purposes – the right statistics for the right business application /use cases – “fit for purpose.”

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