

Finding Solutions at the Attribution Accelerator Conference

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The perfect attribution model, in my opinion, is a chimera. But that doesn't mean that I don't hold out hope for an industry multi-touch attribution model that, even if not perfect, is considered pretty good. Last week executives from data and analytics companies, as well as advertisers and content providers met to exchange some pretty good ideas at the Attribution Accelerator Conference in New York City. The conference strove to present attribution solutions for marketing measurement. "Attribution is the hot spot," stated Alice Sylvester, Partner, Sequent Partners. "The development of a

unified approach is taking place. We are now focusing on data and data quality and have a more practical, more analytical orientation this year.” But the path to a generally accepted attribution model may be further off than we think because of a fear of change in the industry which has relied on mixed media models for decades and the walled gardens of data that have increasingly siloed and segmented data applicability. Some key takeaways from the Attribution Accelerator conference follow.

Challenges to Attribution

There are many reasons why it has taken so long for attribution to start to gain traction in the industry according to John Leeman, former CEO of Fresh Direct. Companies fear choosing the right dataset, upending the current business model or changing the decision set of marketers which results in less creative control and second guessing of their media choices. And, once having instituted an attribution model, what if it’s wrong? “It doesn't have to be perfectly accurate to be valuable,” Leeman stated.

But moving towards a prove-able attribution model is pivotal in this new media world of ever increasing consumer touchpoints that make the journey to purchase a meandering minefield. “Get over your fear; trust your gut, imagine, realize and just do it,” he concluded.

Finding Solutions for Advertisers

Many companies are tackling multi-touch attribution head-on, striving for a real-time model that might even incorporate media-mix modeling, drive minute-by-minute allocation decisions and increase advertising agility. But there are many, many considerations that may vary by brand and by company.

Charlie Hilton, Assistant Vice President, Advanced Analytics for AT&T, noted that her company has been doing attribution for nine years. “We are now shifting gears to true attribution and near real-time optimization,” she said. Her attribution methodology needs to take into account how all of the different media tactics interact with each other, how to quantify the precise combination of different touch points along the way and if advertising

for one product impacts other products.

Kristina Kaganer, Director of Global Data Strategy, Coty, has product lines that span from discount to high end. “Fighting for shelf space at Walmart involves different competition than when you are competing at Sephora,” she noted. Scalable attribution is her company’s goal and that requires the collection and control of pertinent data, technology that functions on the local level (which can differ depending on locality), the standardization of processes that can cross local markets, data storage and analytics.

Finding Solutions for Media Companies

There are five keys to driving sales, according to David Poltrack, CBS Corporation Chief Research Officer and President, CBS Vision. They are reach, targeting, recency, creative and context. “Few TV campaigns are tapping the full potential of TV,” he asserted. From untested creative to lack of regard for context to a cost efficiency rather than a reach orientation to paying little attention to recency, advertisers are not maximizing the true value of television in a buy, he explained. “Digital is not going to replace TV,” Poltrack stated. “Advertisers and marketers must focus on getting TV right. TV is a reach medium and a combination of TV and digital is important. Understanding how to get that combination right is what attribution is all about.”

Summarizing the results of a study with CBS, Leslie Wood, Chief Research Officer, Nielsen Catalina Solutions noted that the fundamentals for advertising are as follows: Creative is the most important factor, although media is playing an increasingly larger role. Reach is critical because only consumers who are reached can respond. Targeting has to focus on buyers of the product or service. Recency is vital because the value of exposure decays over time.

Finding Solutions for Measurement and Data Companies

Nielsen has always owned its own data. But in a world of first-party data and big datasets, Nielsen is becoming more flexible and philosophical in how they acquire data and partner with other companies in the space. Matthew Krepsik, Global Head of Product Leadership

for Marketing ROI at Nielsen, spoke of his company's journey working across walled gardens. "We have the algorithm," he said. "We are good at the math. But it is not about building a better algorithm. The most important thing we can do now is to seek out better data."

It is not a simple journey because, he noted, "every touch point can drive conversion. Shoppers are increasingly changing their behavior. They are becoming omni-channel digital natives and engaging brands directly." Different products have very different purchasing cycles which make them multi-dimensional, multi-faceted and difficult for attribution. Nielsen is striving to tackle the de-duplication of devices to better analyze ROI, data hygiene and privacy compliance, so as to insure an attribution model that better allocates marketing dollars.

Attribution "is an elusive quest," Krepsik concluded. So too for us all.

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