



Attribution Management Revisited

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By David L. Smith, May 13, 2008

The piece on viewthrough and how to more accurately measure it in last week's Metrics Insider was appropriate from a timing standpoint. And as Paul Harvey was fond of saying on the radio: "Now, for the rest of the story."

Last fall, I wrote about how last click attribution is about to become a thing of the past. This has been called Attribution Management or Multiple Attribution Protocol. Both DoubleClick and Atlas have active testing going on in this arena.

So this weekend I read with great interest in BusinessWeek of Microsoft's plans "post Yahoo bid." According to Keith Lorizio, who heads up online sales for Microsoft, the company "is also making the case that search advertising, Google's gold mine, is overrated. In the months ahead, it plans to introduce new ad technology that it says will demonstrate that to advertisers. 'We're going to win with this strategy,' Lorizio says."

Seems to me that out of the obvious tools that Microsoft has at its beck and call, the E-Map Beta (Engagement Mapping) is probably that technology. Recent presentations by Atlas have talked about the "Last Ad Standard" wherein the last click or ad viewed gets 100% of the attribution for sale, download or whatever action the consumer took. In these presentations, they go on to discuss the obvious — that consumers are reached multiple times, across multiple channels, over extended periods of time. This is what in the media world we know as continuity combined with frequency. We've always known that it takes a certain frequency level to ensure communication (generally 3-10x is the ideal in most media types, but your mileage can vary).

I have also heard both DoubleClick and Atlas say in numerous presentations that there is an over-20% increase in conversion among sponsored search clickers who were also exposed to display ads.

The effect of this, when properly modeled, is that the efficacy of search (and resulting efficiency) decreases by 20-25%, and Web and other vehicles increase by the same amount, when evaluating on a CPW basis (cost-per-whatever a client is measuring).

If initial beta testing holds for extended tests, will the result be that the monetization that advertisers are willing to give Google credit for is 20-25% lower? Will that impact Google? Or will the rise in number of searches that happens when a company is doing graphical advertising offset this? (See why Google wants to get into graphical advertising in a much bigger way?)

The Engagement Mapping or Attribution Management application could be a big win for Microsoft. And it could be a big win for all display advertising. It remains to be seen whether "all boats will rise" or whether this will be at the expense of search. As Mr. Harvey also used to say, "Stay tuned for page 2."



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About the Author

David L. Smith, CEO of Mediasmith, is an internationally known expert in the areas of new media application, media strategy, media planning and metrics, and has a number of awards to his name including an Effie and an ad:tech Individual Achievement award. Trained in the major agency media department environment, he has been in the independent media service field since 1978 when he founded Mediasmith. Smith is a pioneer in the application of computers in media, deployment of interactive advertising and media metrics. His experience ranges from participating in the creation and early usage of the first generation of advertising technology (housekeeping systems, data sources) to the current issues facing the use of metrics in the digital marketplace. He has been at the forefront of new metrics applications, with major involvement on the AAAAs, ARF, OPA and IAB national committees working to establish and refine standards in metrics, business practices and financial issues for interactive advertising. Smith has also contributed his knowledge through articles and interviews in an extensive range of media over the past two decades. He is a regular speaker at Industry events including iMedia, @d:tech, OMMA and others and writes regularly for a number of industry publications and Web sites including iMediaConnection and MediaPost. His advisory board involvement includes OPA, IAB, comScore/Media Metrix, AdEx and a number of start-up private companies. A University of Washington graduate, Smith is married with a seventeen-year-old son; plays guitar; and is a gourmet Chinese cook. You'll find him at the office early most mornings unless he is traveling with his family.

About Mediasmith

Mediasmith is a recognized leader in digital media planning and buying. We specialize in the integration of traditional and digital media, search, emerging technologies. We architect plans across all media, in all markets, in virtually all product categories utilizing the right combination of media options to help our clients grow in the increasingly fractured media environment; from planning and buying, to tracking, optimization, and reporting of ROI on all media efforts. Mediasmith remains dedicated to the evolution and standardization of digital media practices. As committed innovators, we test the latest in metrics and analytics, providing solutions that enable us to act as a catalyst for our clients' media innovations.