

Use Big Data To Better Target Ad Messages

The goal with big data, according to a panel at the PromaxBDA Station Summit, is finding messages that resonate with segments of the audience, rather than creating blanket messages for broad demographic groups.

By Kevin Downey
TVNewsCheck, June 27, 2013 7:52 PM EDT

TV stations are worried about how they can sort through massive amounts of data coming in from audience measurement systems to gain insights to create effective promotional campaigns, judging by conversations TV station marketers are having at PromaxBDA Station Summit in Las Vegas.

Experts on the panel “Dealing with Data: Using the Tools You Have to Focus Your Message” set out on Thursday to provide tips to transform big data into useable insights.

Steven Walsh, SVP of local market sales at Rentrak, moderated the session.

The goal, the panelists say, is to take audience insight further than traditional demographic groups.

“If you want to look at adults 25-54, you can,” says Patricia Marsden, corporate director of research at E. W. Scripps Co. “But why don’t you add something to that, like adults 25-54 with children in their home? That gets you one little step closer to understanding their motivation.”

Sometimes, trying to reach demographic groups comes up empty.“

“We’ve all been perplexed by carpet-bombing campaigns where you buy huge sums of GRPs that don’t move the needle,” says Jack MacKenzie, president of Magid Generational Strategies. “That’s not because it wasn’t bought smart; it wasn’t the right message.”

Transforming big data into the right message begins with sifting through the data and ditching what you don’t need.

“No one wants to visit a dump,” says MacKenzie. “We spend a lot of time for our clients figuring out which of that data matters. A lot of it doesn’t. We have to figure out how all that data works together. Then, you have to put it in a place where you want to interact with it.”

The goal with big data, he and other panelists say, is finding messages that resonate with segments of the audience, rather than create blanket messages for broad demographic groups.

“Finding moments when the brain and heart are available and getting the right message in front of them is the creative process,” he says. “You have to help creatives realize it’s not about cool copy. It’s about cool copy that motivates them.”

Sumi Barry, SVP of consumer and market intelligence at NBC Entertainment, says her team looks for patterns in the data that point to viewers’ passions.

“We’re looking at so much data that it is my job to find patterns that tell a story,” she says. “Segmentation is a great way to understand passion. We take away behaviors. We keep it very simple. What is interesting to them? What do they love to watch? Our marketing team responds to that. It becomes much more of a conversation when we talk about passion.”

When TV stations think of their business as a multiplatform venue to reach viewers in their community, culling through big data to find useable insights becomes even more important.

“How often do we take a TV promo and slap it online?” Marsden asks. “It’s not the same audience. The day is coming, if it’s not already here, when we [will be] cutting promos for what are very attractive audiences on digital platforms. If you don’t have a basic profile of your audience on all platforms, you may surprise yourself.”

The challenge for many stations is that the new, big data is coming in while most stations are also still using the audience measurement data that it’s replacing.

“Big data is the brave, bold new world,” says Alex Jasiukowicz, creative services director at Hearst’s ABC affiliate WMUR in the Boston DMA. “Most of us aren’t there yet. The tools we have are formatted on the old world. We are in transition now.”