All-media spend packs punch

Mark Ritson

The general consensus within the media community is that Kim Portrate is doing a splendid job despite a generally thankless role. Portrate runs Think TV, the organisation set up by the TV companies in Australia to protect and promote the commercial reputation of television.

It's a tricky challenge because not only does she serve diverse and competing masters, but she must also defend television's significant share of the advertising market in the face of concerted efforts from other media channels to pull this not-insignificant sum in their direction. Portrate's met that challenge over the past few years with the judicious use of consumer data to suggest other media are not quite up to scratch while making a strong, evidence-based case for the power of TV advertising. And she is not afraid to mix it up when required.

So when I saw her face pop up in the pages of Mumbrella last week I rubbed my hands with glee and sat down for another good old-fashioned media spanking.

But I was disappointed from the outset. Portrate's article, amicably titled Yes, TV is Your Friend, was a paragon of collegiality. It was an article filled with co-operative metaphors about school friends, making cocktails and working in tandem. There wasn't a right hook or derogatory claim anywhere to be seen. Despite my initial disappointment in the article, Portrate has not lost the plot. Instead, I think she is sensing what many of us have also observed over the past six months — a softening.

Image: Getty Images

> Most big media companies have become adept at selling multiple channels.

We've lived through one hell of a media decade. One that has seen new, unproved channels such as search and digital display become industry standards. Formerly dominant giants of the media world have declined and been forced to transform. In that climate of change and struggle it's perhaps not surprising that vitriol and antagonism ran rife among the competing media channels.

Facebook muscled its way into the media spending of most big clients by openly, and occasionally correctly, critiquing the effectiveness of incumbent media. Traditional media firms, not least News Corp, fought back with counterclaims and rejoinders. Every major media channel commissioned research to show that their products were more impactful, effective and profitable than others. Professors and opinion leaders were dusted off and then wheeled out at conferences to say that radio, digital, TV or outdoor was the superior option.

There was only one snag with the "my media beats your media" narrative that dominated the discourse of the past decade. None of it was correct. The inconvenient truth about advertising media is that in almost every circumstance the answer to the eternal question of which channel should I invest my marketing budget in was always the same — all of them.

Look at any successful campaign and you invariably see a number of different channels doing different things and working in synch. The very reason we call it a "campaign" or speak of the media "mix" should be evidence enough that different weapons could and should be used together to get the job done. The more channels used, the more effective a campaign becomes. The evidence of that synergy is undeniable. If you look at the Effectiveness Awards it is apparent that none of the submissions use just one dominant channel. It's also clear that there is a strong correlation between more channels and greater effectiveness. Bronze Effie winners in 2017 averaged four channels. Silver winners averaged six. Gold made it to seven.

One of the most impressive media measurement companies is Analytic Partners. In one of my favourite studies, the company assessed the effectiveness of more than 3000 American advertising campaigns. About one-third of those campaigns used only one channel. A similar proportion used two channels and, whatever that dual combination of media was, the synergy of using two different tools resulted in an average increase in return on investment of 19 per cent over campaigns using just one channel. A smaller proportion of the campaigns in the study used three channels and enjoyed an increase in ROI over single channel campaigns of 23 per cent. Four channels delivered a 31 per cent boost. Five delivered 35 per cent. More does mean more in communications.

As we come to the end of the aggressive 10-year battle between different channels and media companies I think a combination of exhaustion, maturity and effectiveness research is leading most marketers back to the realisation that integration and synergy beat separation and specialism.

It's also apparent that most big media companies have become adept at selling multiple channels. Clive Dickens over at Seven is as much a digital guru as he is a TV man. YouTube's future depends on being watched on a TV set as much as it does on a smartphone. I spent last week at News Corp's Brisbane HQ talking about their digital offerings more than their newspapers.

Integration is upon us. The best way to sell more TV is not to suggest superiority but point instead to its spectacular catalytic capabilities. When you add TV to a campaign that does not currently feature it you improve the chance of it having a significant impact on the market by almost 30 per cent. Not all companies can afford TV. But it's a similar story for news media advertising, which achieves a similar catalytic effect for significantly less initial outlay.

Portrate's Mumbrella article was not a signal that she is losing her punch or her organisation is stepping back from promoting TV as an advertising media. Instead her co-operative message is the right one to increase TV advertising spending in the collegiate days ahead.

Courtesy The Australian

Plan ahead to stop bad behaviour ruining the office party

Gary Martin

It's that time of the year when many employers around the State turn their attention to planning end-of-year workplace Christmas parties to reward employees for their dedicated work, reflect on the past 12 months and bring an often much-appreciated dose of joy into the workplace.

Often adorned by bright colourful decorations including shining lights and glittering tinsel, the annual office Christmas party has long been recognised as the centrepiece of many workplaces' social calendars.

But for some workplaces this year, all that glitters will not be gold.

That's because the Grinch will step in and steal the Christmas party, with some organisations fearing the annual bash might encourage behaviour that could land the organisation and their employees in hot water.

These employers rightfully recognise that, as a work function, the annual Christmas party can represent a significant risk to employees' health and safety — one that they would prefer not to take.

A study this month by consultants Challenger, Gray & Christmas found that only 65 per cent of companies they surveyed in the US were planning a holiday celebration this year — the lowest level since 2009.

The #MeToo movement, which has highlighted sexual harassment and assault in the workplace, was cited as a key reason.

It is a fact that high-profile sexual harassment cases have contributed to employers' unease with staging any workplace event where often excessive alcohol consumption combined with a more relaxed festive atmosphere might change the regular workplace dynamic.

After all, we have all heard the post-Christmas function stories or witnessed the appalling conduct of a small contingent of our co-workers.

Some of those behaviours have resulted in reputational damage to organisations, some employees have had their health and wellbeing compromised, and others have lost their jobs.

So here is a sobering thought — ditching the end-of-year function because of the attached risks is a move that would make Ebenezer Scrooge proud. But when employers deny their employees the opportunity to participate in an end-of-year celebration for fear of inappropriate behaviour by a minority, they send a strong message to all — we don't trust you to behave in an appropriate way.

Not to play down the serious nature and implications of various forms of inappropriate workplace behaviour, but a better solution than cancelling the end-of-year function involves putting in place what others have coined Kringle conduct protocols.

These protocols include reminding employees before an event that attendance at the annual Christmas party or end-of-year celebration is a work function and that regular workplace standards, policy and procedures, and codes of conduct apply — even if the event is being held offsite or outside of regular work hours.

Kringle protocols can extend to having a number of employees appointed to fulfil a "skipper"-type role during the event — to keep an eye out for any early signs of inappropriate behaviour and to take action to nip that behaviour in the bud before it escalates.

They can also include a pre-event safety inspection of any offsite venue, limiting alcohol consumption via a voucher system and providing abundant non-alcoholic alternatives, and advising employees of transport options.

The annual end-of-year celebration is an excellent vehicle through which to build more morale and teamwork, to deliver key company messages, to recognise employee performance and to highlight plans for the year ahead.

Pulling the plug on the end-of-year celebration creates a trust vacuum between employers and employees and may represent a greater risk than staging the event itself.

So trust your employees to do the right thing — and start planning now for an end-of-year event that will be remembered for all the right reasons.

Professor Gary Martin is chief executive of the Australian Institute of Management WA