5 CRITICAL STEPS IN TURNING INTEGRATED DATA INTO REVENUE

PUBLISHING EXECUTIVE

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Audience data is a publisher's most valuable asset in today's hyper-targeted, multichannel world. Yet to capitalize on their wealth of data, media organizations must first bring it all together in a unified database that enables them to better mine, manage, and monetize it.

Doing this is no easy feat, as media technologists will tell you. Publishers must take inventory of existing data across disparate systems, consider their desired data applications, and then invest in the right tools and team to combine datasets for success. If your organization is just getting started, read Publishing Executive's earlier report overviewing key steps in developing an integrated database.

Ronda Hughes, B2B media and data specialist

Though data integration is a daunting task, it's one publishers must undertake to more effectively target their audience segments and prove their value to advertisers in the current digital landscape. As business media veteran Ronda Hughes puts it, "Content is still king, but data is going to make you rich."

Hughes, a consultant and former SVP of marketing and digital solutions at B2B company EnsembleIQ, stresses that to see a return on your integrated database investment, there are crucial actions that must be taken across your organization after implementation. She outlined these best practices using the acronym TEAMS while speaking at Publishing Executive's 2019 FUSE Media Summit in Philadelphia.

T rue Integration

E valuating and Identifying Rich and Missing Data

A dopting Audience-First Digital Sales Strategy

M andatory Marketing for Digital Campaigns

S uccinct yet Comprehensive Reporting

This report based on Hughes' presentation at FUSE Media explains each step in her TEAMS process, which you can embrace to help your media organization turn integrated data into revenue.

STEP 1: TRUE INTEGRATION

Before you can reap the benefits of integration, it's critical to assess whether your organization has a truly unified database. For every contact across each of your brands, Hughes recommends that you check for the following four data types in your system.

Channel Preferences

You should be tracking your print subscribers versus your digital and e-newsletter subscribers. Make sure you have webinar registrations, event registrations, website downloads, browser notification allows, permissioned text/SMS, and other channel preference data in your system as well. "If you're really listening to your customers or your readers, they will tell you what they prefer and it's up to you to track that and make sure you're doing a good job," says Hughes.

Traditional Demographic Data

Of course, you also need to know who is in your database, where they're located, and how you can message them. For B2B publishers, Hughes recommends prioritizing the collection of industry, business function, and title for each contact. "Sounds old-fashioned, but if you can collect at least that out of the gate, then your segmentation is still going to work," she says.

Engagement/Behavioral Data

Next you need to know when each contact is engaging across your various content channels. Monitor newsletter opens/clicks, engagement frequency, website visits, article visits, and text/SMS opens. Also look at media types, Hughes adds. Does this contact like to download white papers? Do they always engage with text notifications? Your database should seamlessly provide you with information to determine when and how each contact chooses to consume your content.

Contextual/Topic Data

Finally, you must pay attention to what your audience is reading. To do this, it's crucial to have each brand's website taxonomy "buttoned up," says Hughes. If your content is classified and structured well, then you can identify the topics that draw different users and leverage that intel to improve digital campaigns.

With all this data at your fingertips in one depository, your organization can more quickly define valuable audience segments. Here's a simple but effective segmentation example Hughes uses for B2B event marketing:

- Within specific industry (brand segmentation)
- Director level and higher (traditional demographic)
- Attended at least 1 event within last 2 years (channel)
- Attended at least 1 webinar within last 6 months (channel)
- Clicked into daily newsletter within last 30 days (engagement/behavioral)

"That is a hot person that should be going to your event," says Hughes. "If you have a true integrated database, you can do this at a couple of clicks of a button and keep doing it."

STEP 2: EVALUATING AND IDENTIFYING RICH AND MISSING DATA

> "Make your audience want to give their information to you and make them feel like they're relevant in the industry."

Now for the fun part: It's time to start "cleaning and shopping in your own closet," says Hughes. When you're able to cull through all existing data at once, it's easier to spot new opportunities or devise plans to re-engage contacts in your system. Here are a handful of tactics to try:

Find Your Serial Engagers

"These are the people who are your bread and butter," says Hughes. In other words, the users who consume your content regularly and via multiple channels (e.g., print, website, events). "You might assume who they are, but unless you really pull them and look at their personas, you don't know who they are," she says. "You might come up with a few surprises." Those surprises might lead you to underserved audiences and untapped revenue.

Evaluate Critical Demographic White Space

"You have fresh blood in your database that you are not even talking to just because you might only have a country, a city, state, and an email address for them," says Hughes. Identify those contacts and develop a data collection strategy. Hughes recommends automating progressive forms to ask for missing demographic data on renewals or product promotions, hiring a firm to research and data fill for you, or sending editorial assets (like webinars or whitepapers) to solicit the information you need.

In addition, keep talking to existing contacts to maintain their demographic data. The old rule of auditing records every three years no longer applies – employees don't stay in their same positions and at the same companies as long as they once did, says Hughes. Think about how you can "make your audience want to give their information to you and make them feel like they're relevant in the industry," she recommends.

Re-Engage Old and Non-Engaged Records

Don't let non-engagers just sit in your database. Put them on a journey and let them know what they're missing out on, advises Hughes. "I live and die by 90-day engagement. If a newsletter subscriber doesn't open, click, and engage within 90 days, they get put on a timeout and get a re-engagement campaign," she says. Thanks to modern marketing tools, connected to your integrated database, that whole process can be automated.

STEP 3: ADOPTING AUDIENCE-FIRST DIGITAL SALES STRATEGY

Your audience determines the success of your digital advertising campaign, stresses Hughes. After all, clients want their message to reach (and engage) their preferred audience – whether they're looking to generate leads, establish thought leadership, or drive brand awareness.

In all likelihood, an advertiser's target audience is consuming your content in a variety of ways. That means sales reps can no longer go to clients leading with product offerings (e.g., magazines, events, webinars); they must instead adopt a data-driven, audience-first sales strategy. Using insights extracted from your database, your reps can now say to advertisers, "Hey, I know who you want to reach and here's how we're going to do it based on the people we have and how they're engaged," says Hughes.

Always use data for presales research so you can prepare reps for their sales calls. The report types outlined by Hughes below can help your team seal more advertising deals.

Engagement Report

You should be familiar with the potential client's product or service, so do your homework by looking at the audience that's engaging with related articles from your brands. "Pull people who have read those articles, look at the persona, and then get the number of like people in your database," suggests Hughes. "Now you can say, 'We have about 25,000 people that we know are interested in what you have, so maybe you should have some sponsored content on our website.'"

Account-based Report

Try pulling an account-based report for your potential client based on the top 10 companies they're currently working with – or trying to go after. "Go to your database and find out how many people you have at these top 10 companies," says Hughes. "Pick the most engaged, and literally show a picture of that person from LinkedIn and have a one sheeter." If the CEO at one of your client's target companies subscribes to your newsletters and regularly attends your events, that's a major selling point; use that contact to demonstrate the value of your audience data.

Reach Report

Advertisers often come to media sales calls with a channel or product preference. They might say they're not spending on print anymore, dislike banner ads, or only want a newsletter campaign. It's important for your sales reps to show advertisers that not everyone in their target audience engages with the same type of media. "Do a crossover report and show the advertiser that unless they advertise across multiple platforms, they are not reaching their entire audience," says Hughes. "That should sell it right now." She suggests charging a premium for serial engagers who interact with your brand across multiple channels.

Ronda Hughes shares her insight with 2019 FUSE Media Summit attendees.

STEP 4: MANDATORY MARKETING FOR DIGITAL CAMPAIGNS

The advertiser has invested money in a multichannel campaign, and your team has invested time in creating great content – now make sure you're doing everything possible to promote that content. You won't see campaign results without marketing, no matter how great the content.

"Marketing should be part of the campaign package," says Hughes. Don't rely on casual web traffic and newsletter opens; drive audience to your advertising product through dedicated email promotions, newsletter banners, high-impact ads (such as nanobars and push downs), browser notifications, content syndications, and more efforts.

"You don't even have to tell your advertisers about it," she adds. "Some of this needs to be built in. This is making your advertiser's stuff look really good, and it's making your campaign successful." A fruitful campaign guarantees your client will come back and spend more money with you.

STEP 5: SUCCINCT YET COMPREHENSIVE REPORTING

"To ensure reoccurring revenue, just as much effort should go into your post-campaign communication as your pre-campaign communication," says Hughes. "Think of that final report as being the first step into getting that campaign again from that client. If you think of it that way, your teams will jump on board and make sure that these reports are getting done and done right."

Your reports should be integrated – just like your database and, hopefully, the advertiser's cross-channel campaign. "Show off here," says Hughes. "You are using email newsletter, website retargeting, and leads if they're wanting leads. Make sure you're including all those metrics in your reports."

Also important: Keep your reporting as simple to understand as possible. As Hughes puts it, clients shouldn't need a degree in data science to interpret your reports. Before kicking off any campaign, always set expectations with the client for reporting frequency, as well as standards for the metrics you will use in reports.

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TEAMS ENABLE INTEGRATED DATA SUCCESS

To execute all five of these critical steps – and turn integrated data into revenue – you need passion across your organization. "Audience- and data-first strategy and dedication comes from the top down," Hughes emphasizes. "You need a C-level champion, and then you need some people that can go evangelize through the company who are passionate about it."

From editorial and audience development to sales and ad operations, all departments must grasp the value of integrated audience data and do their part to maintain and leverage the database. At the very least, says Hughes, the directors of each department must champion an audience-first approach.

"Every team within your organization has to buy in to the importance of data collection, audience segmentation, quality over quantity, and a content strategy that drives engagement, which leads to rich data and insights," says Hughes.