

Why Transparency Matters to Crossmedia. And Why It Should Matter to You.

When the news broke at 2016's ANA Media Leadership Conference that Jon Mandel was pointing the finger at media agencies for the "widespread kickbacks," we thought "It's about time."



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Crossmedia decided long ago to take a stance on transparency. Finally, this issue was getting the widespread attention it deserves. Now that the ANA has completed its investigation into the matter, we know other agencies will be praying that no one asks about their approach on transparency. We, on the other hand, love to share Crossmedia's POV.

Crossmedia may be the only media agency on the planet that promises 100% transparency. No kickbacks, no double dipping in programmatic buying and no "proprietary" tools white-labeled from off the shelf products. Maybe it's easier as an independent, but what you see is what you get. We make money the old fashioned way - we earn it.

Our roots are in Germany and when the transparency debate heated up there in 2007, we implemented our "Transparency Report" for clients. Yes, I said 2007. That was over a decade ago and it began across our German offices. In 2018 Crossmedia will offer the same transparency report in this country and we believe the whole industry should do so. This unique process provides Crossmedia with a huge point of differentiation for our clients. We were always surprised that this issue didn't heat up in the U.S. sooner. Now that it has, we are thrilled and ready.

Here is how we are doing it in Germany. From a process standpoint, every year, a third party auditor examines our books and records to ensure that the only source of income to Crossmedia is remuneration from clients, not the media. It also proves that all discounts, rebates, volume incentives and other work of the devil is 100% paid out to the clients according to their contribution. Finally, we require sworn affidavits from all members of management that they have not accepted any financial benefits from the media.

Of course we believe in honest, straightforward business practices and the importance of ethics when dealing with media partners and clients. But, the real issue behind transparency is not a moral one. It's about neutrality. While we believe being transparent is the right thing to do, our tactics also keep the traditional principal-agent relationship intact. Crossmedia has always operated in a fully transparent and neutral fashion. Why? Because only neutral agencies can be objective and objectivity is the single most important virtue a media agency must have today.

Our approach makes us invaluable to our clients. And that is being proven out as we continue to gain the trust of a growing number of blue chip clients who are demanding more accountability from their agency partners. So why does this matter to you? Five reasons:

- Objectivity: Since we are not reselling inventory or data, there is no incentive to work with a specific media owner, data provider, or technology partner. And because we have no silos, we simply plan for whatever channel[s] make sense, not the ones that make us the most money.

- Visibility: Clients have full access to their own data and full clarity in what media is being bought and how it's measured.
- Agility: When not tied to commitments, an agency and its client are free to move monies across channels, partners, data providers and service offerings.
- Measurability: With clean, unbiased results, a transparent model allows for a truer view on attribution and ROI.
- Collaboration: Since all the cards are on the table, there is simply less friction between the agency, the client and amongst the integrated agency team.

When you couple transparency with a fully integrated and non-siloed structure, you have the only current model for delivering true neutrality and objectivity in media today. It also means, you have nothing to hide when you show up to the ANA Conferences.

Finally, we would like to offer a thought to those who joined the 4A's / ANA transparency task force: transparency is not just about showing your invoices. It's about ensuring neutrality of advice. Hopefully what the task force comes back with will be in-line with what we have already established in Germany and are working on here - a real-life, self imposed, unbiased standard by which the industry can operate.

Stay neutral my friends!