



How to Transition into Digital Ad Sales

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Chapter 1

"Digital media sells itself" was the initial battle cry--turns out that's just not true. What's lost in all the "hype" about the rise of digital is the glaring lack of proficient digital media sellers. The opportunities are rife for proven media salespeople in this new emerging environment.

Salespeople, regardless of their prior area of expertise, will need to work smarter.

Smarter, not harder. Digital has its own terminology, its own processes, and its own specific role in any marketer's messaging strategy. The digital ad market is still not as "ordered" or "organized" as the markets for radio, TV, or print, but that situation will improve. Given its relative newness, lots of unsubstantiated or unjustifiable claims are being made by and about many digital platforms--this presents a huge opportunity for professional salespeople who bring a disciplined approach to the table that reeks of credibility!

Do your homework!

As always, the shortcut just doesn't work if you want to be a top-flight digital salesperson. If at all possible, get some formal training on this new media. Read and absorb as much as you can from relevant trade websites and newsletters. Digital is evolving rapidly, and it's a serious challenge to keep up with the most recent developments--but also absolutely critical. You're not really "there" until you can honestly say, "I know as much about digital as I know about the media platform that I currently sell." Savvy buyers will test your knowledge, and falling short in their eyes can be costly!

Share what you're learning!

It always helps to discuss new stuff with others. You deepen your comprehension of the material at hand and enrich another person's understanding at the same time! Members of your sales team and yes, even your clients will probably appreciate the information and insights that you pass along to them. Be careful not to come across as a "teacher" or a "preacher" but merely as someone who is excited about what they have learned and takes pleasure in sharing it with others. How hard is that?

Digital should be used as a tactic not a strategy!

The sales strategy that you're presenting has a range of tactical components that will probably include various media including digital. Most marketers will readily agree that there is no one platform that gets the job done-- it's the ongoing challenge of finding the right mix that matters. No traditional seller should think of digital as a replacement for various established platforms. Digital is simply the newest weapon in the arsenal. And the best salespeople use all of their weapons to their best advantage!





In any event, don't be defensive of the status quo!

As a professional salesperson, being perceived as someone who is resistant to change is a non-starter. That perception implies that you either cannot or will not keep up with the changes that are occurring in your business. Very few clients have much respect or interest in engaging with salespeople who are the "walking dead." At a time when almost every business is looking for fresh and productive ways to operate, who has the need for a salesperson that appears clueless?

This is a very exciting and potentially lucrative time to be in multimedia ad sales.

If you're willing to make the sacrifices, do the work, and see the opportunities, continued success will be there for the taking. Choosing an alternate path that doesn't challenge you to grow in this new environment may lead you to a rather undesirable place. The decision is yours..

Are You Ready To Do The Learning?

Chapter 2

As always, information is power!

There is simply no substitute for a substantial and complete understanding of the new world of digital advertising. There's no shortcut here. Taking the time and making the effort to learn all about it is essential. Having a cursory understanding simply won't get the job done. It's about becoming a student of a brand new game!

Leaders must learn the material first!

Asking a sales team to dive into material that the leader doesn't comprehend is a non-starter! Success in achieving this mission begins with leaders fully understanding the new territory. Followers will know right away whether their leaders are really into it, or are simply faking it. The latter perception breeds a lack of respect for leadership and sends a signal that the mission really isn't that important after all.

Embracing digital ad sales is a race against time!

Right now, most advertisers and marketers are way ahead of legacy media salespeople in terms of their understanding and embrace of digital advertising. Many legacy media providers are still trying to figure out how to build or launch digital assets as extensions of their established traditional platforms. It's up to the leadership of legacy media to close that gap as quickly as possible. The ad world will not slow down and wait for them to catch up!





Initial learning efforts should be externally directed.

Installing a structured approach that is executed by a qualified third party will move the process forward faster and more efficiently. In addition, delegating this task to an outside entity strengthens the commitment to getting it done. It's also likely that an outside entity will be far better equipped to give the learners better and deeper instruction than they could develop on their own. "Self-taught" is not always necessarily better -- this is one of those times!

Given the nature of digital advertising, a commitment to ongoing learning will be essential.

Digital advertising is a work in progress, which continues to evolve constantly. Technology and the ongoing process of trial and error have dramatic and immediate impact on this new platform. It is imperative to stay plugged into the trends and developments, remembering that having a fundamental understanding comes first. Leadership must make another material commitment to have a process in place that disseminates critical information to everyone involved quickly and consistently!

Leadership must lay out a real “game plan” to ramp up for success in digital ad sales.

2015 will see even more ad dollars shifting from legacy to digital platforms. Smart legacy sales leaders will see this as a proactive opportunity as opposed to a reactive one. This is the time to go on the offensive instead of defending a rapidly changing status quo. Establishing benchmarks for enhancing performance are critical. Learning must always precede doing. Leadership not only sets the tone, but also lays out tangible steps with deadlines to move this critical undertaking forward!

Begin the New Year with a renewed commitment to incorporating digital ad selling into your sales team's arsenal.

There are at least one or more competitors in your market that are already making inroads into this new landscape. Doing little or nothing at all is unacceptable. Making deep and comprehensive learning the vital first step will help to ensure success as 2015 unfolds!



Are You Ready to Do the Doing?

Chapter 3

Let's put what we've learned to work!

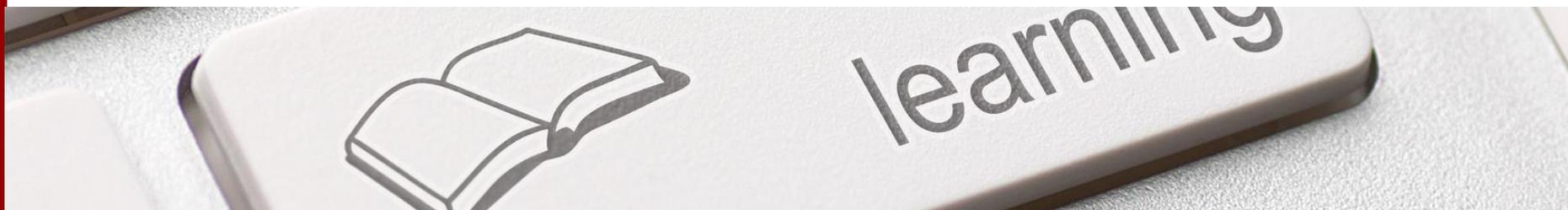
Assuming that you've become well informed about this new world of digital media, applying that knowledge is the challenge. It's about adding that knowledge to your arsenal, and developing holistic sales strategies that bring all of the assets to the table. "Digital vs. legacy" is a non-starter - - this is not an "either/or" conversation. It's about adding digital to your value proposition to give your clients an even more compelling reason to do business with you.

Simply put, look at the world differently!

By nature, humans are creatures of habit, especially when those habits give us comfort. Discomfort stimulates change more rapidly than comfort does. And legacy media is obviously feeling some discomfort now because of the rise of digital media platforms. We need to look at our business differently in order to alleviate that discomfort. Your clients, with few exceptions, are engaged in the same process, trying to figure out how to transform their respective businesses in this new environment. We should be doing the same.

Effecting change is a team sport!

It will take serious and continuous effort from every member of the team to make a successful transition. Leaders must lead, but followers must follow too. It's impossible to be successful if only a part of the group embraces the "new stuff" while everybody else keeps doing things as they always have. You will buy-in, preferably based on positive expectations, from everybody! Younger staff members will probably "get it" more readily than older ones, but no one is exempted. Leading by example, and establishing specific goals are the two major keys for getting this done.





Be loyal to the mission!

No question that there will be bumps and obstacles along the way. Those simply cannot deter you from pressing on with the objective of transforming the team and its environment. There will be failures that should be embraced as learning experiences. No matter how well you plan this out, the unanticipated will always rear its ugly head! Internalizing those episodes and adapting from them will make you and the team wiser and stronger as you move forward. Confusion and chaos often precede real success!

Think of your current clients as partners in this exploration!

Like any new territory, the unknowns still outweigh the knowns. That applies to both sellers and buyers of digital ads. Sharing experiences and exchanging ideas about what's working and what's not is a tremendous opportunity to get even closer to your most important clientele. They are being challenged as well by this new data-driven environment. Having an ongoing dialogue with them can only create a win/win situation. Anyone who professes to "know it all" at this point is either delusional or arrogant or both!

Like any other endeavor, we only get better with practice!

Apply at least the same rigor to selling digital platforms as you do to selling more established ones. Expanding every sales conversation to include all platforms starts at the office and reaches out to every client interface. Having a "global perception" will lead to being perceived as a "global" solutions provider - -and that should be the real goal in the first place! Dedicated and consistent practice leads to new habits that can only benefit your enterprise!

Let's stay in touch!



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