

DIGITAL

Turner Adds Sales Tool Nexus

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The Turner Network is one of the few Web publishers to walk the walk in dealing with ad networks. A year and a half ago, it yanked its inventory from outside ad nets, choosing instead to create its own across its properties.

Now, Turner is rolling out a new tool it hopes will take the best of the automated ad world, such as targeting specific audiences, and combining it with the type of high-quality content integrations that media owners like Turner lean on as their marketplace differentiator. Called Nexus, the Web inventory platform is designed to help Turner's sales force partner with clients to come up with plans that matches the marketers' goals. It also gives them the assurance they'll reach their target audience without sacrificing control over where their messages are shown.

"The online ad marketplace has become so opaque," said Walker Jacobs, senior vp of Turner's sports and entertainment digital ad sales. "There are so many networks that all boast of a black box or a secret sauce."

Nexus aims to take a different approach, swapping in transparency by leaning on industry standard data from Nielsen, @Plan and internal research. Turner's sales team can tap Nexus to show specific programs and how they would appear, alongside data of the audiences they'd reach and brand lifts from previous campaigns.

Turner sees the technology as an aid to the sales process rather than a replacement. The Web is moving to automate more facets of the ad sales process—ad networks were a first step. But since then, real-time avail aggregators like ad exchanges have popped up, promising to let advertisers cherry pick audiences.

"Marketers have to make a choice: Do I want to reach audience and sacrifice where and how I reach them?" said Jacobs. "For so many of our clients who have objectives other than an exact direct-response metric, are those sacrifices they have to make around environment worth getting the benefit of audience-based targeting?"

"It's a great sign for content owners to start to leverage the value of their own content," said Jonathan Hsia, digital director, Coca-Cola account, at Starcom MediaVest Group. "You have ad networks just talking scale, scale, scale but what you're running doesn't have relevance to the content."