



Audit Bureau of Circulations



Canwest Explains the Significance of an ABC Audit and the Strength of the ABC Brand to its Advertisers

Situation

Canwest is Canada's leading international media company and operates one of Canada's largest newspaper chains, reaching 4.8 million readers on a weekly basis. The publications are complemented by several online properties under the canada.com network. Canwest is also the largest publisher of English language paid daily newspapers in Canada, including 10 major market dailies and 23 smaller market daily, weekly, and community papers.

Canwest Newspapers:



Issue

Readership is the predominant ad metric in Canada. Circulation, however, remains a valuable form of measurement in the eyes of media planners; without it there is no readership. Certain advertisers, particularly flyer advertisers, need to know how many copies of the newspaper are sold every day, how many of those are paid and where they are distributed, when preparing their media plans.

Solution

To meet the requests of media planners and buyers, Canwest relies on a dual system of auditing, using NADbank to attain newspaper readership information and the Audit Bureau of Circulations (ABC) to verify its newspaper circulation data.

Results

Canwest uses ABC to conduct circulation audits for 13 of its daily newspapers. Additionally, 10 Canwest newspapers participate in ABC's Flyer Distribution Verification Service (FDVS), an audit designed to meet the unique needs of Canada's flyer distribution market by providing advertisers with the assurance that their flyers are properly handled and distributed by publishers.

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– **Kirk Allen**, Senior Vice President of Advertising and Sales, Canwest

Importance of a Circulation Audit in Canada

Circulation audits are important to advertisers in Canada because they ensure that a newspaper’s claims are true and accurate, and are supported by documentation.

“Having a neutral third party like ABC split out the difference between paid and bulk and break it down by region and area is very key to insert advertisers,” said **Kirk Allen**, senior vice president of advertising and sales at Canwest.

Allen noted that Canwest uses a dual system of readership and circulation measurement to sell to its advertisers.

“ABC’s circulation audits serve two purposes: they confirm the net paid circulation numbers and ensure the right standards are in place,” he said.

The Power of the ABC Brand in Canada

Craig Barnard, Canwest’s senior vice president of reader sales and service, publishing, stressed that ABC is viewed as the gold standard of media measurement in Canada among newspapers and buyers.

“I’ve been in the industry for 30 years now and have known ABC since the day I started,” said **Barnard**. “Everyone knows that ABC sets the gold standards for newspaper and magazine auditing.”

Allen added, “Certain advertisers will ask for the ABC audit by name. The ABC brand is very well viewed in Canada. It’s a brand that is tried, trusted and reliable.”

ABC Auditing Standards Rank High in the Marketplace

According to **Barnard**, ABC’s low error tolerance and gold standard in auditing puts them above the competitors in the Canadian marketplace.

“We moved all of our business to ABC a year ago,” said **Barnard**. “ABC is now doing our FDVS audits for all our daily newspapers and for the flyer distribution companies we own. I think at the end of the day, ABC’s zero tolerance will still have the advantage over other audits in Canada.”

Using ABC Reports to Support Circulation Numbers

The advertising and sales departments of Canwest use ABC’s database to pull reports such as Publisher’s Statements and FAS-FAX to supply to their advertisers when requested.

“Advertisers or agencies will use these reports quite often to support the rationale behind their buying decision,” said **Allen**.

Allen described the areas media planners focus on when evaluating their media buys.

“A media planner puts the campaign together to present to their client. The campaign plan is based on either readership data from NADBank or circulation data from ABC. Either way, the client knows a third party has provided those numbers.”

Allen added that ABC reports are an important part of Canwest’s media kit.

“All of our newspapers file online,” **Barnard** said. “And we access Publisher’s Statements and Audit Reports all the time for competitive reasons.”

ABC Audit Standards the Most Rigorous and Widely Accepted

Recently, several newspaper companies chose to engage another organization to audit their circulation—effectively creating multiple standards, reports and metrics for Canada’s major metro newspapers. Barnard and Allen agreed that these changes will make comparability more difficult for media buyers.

“The changes to Canadian newspaper auditing have sent a ripple through the ad agency buying community in Toronto,” said **Barnard**.

“It’s a huge departure to what’s been the norm in Canada. We’re a member of ABC and plan on staying with ABC. We support ABC’s audit standards and rigor implemented in the audit process.”

“It will now be a little more difficult for media buyers and planners to compare,” added **Allen**. “Agencies are not happy. We’ve had some very vocal leaders in the agency community express their concern and dissatisfaction.”



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