

MBPT Spotlight: What Do Advertisers Want from the Upfront and NewFronts?

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With the number of events and presentations by media brands in this year's Upfront/NewFronts at an all-time high, the old adage "Be careful what you wish for" comes to mind with regard to media companies.

The increase in activity certainly could be good news for companies like music website Beatport, Bloomberg Media, Collective Digital Studio and several other NewFronts newcomers, but I emphasize the words "could be."

The reality is that these players — plus all of the traditional media companies vying for advertiser attention — are swimming in a very crowded pond. Media companies and their brands must cut through all of the clutter not only to survive but to win.

In order to stand out from the crowd, it's critical that television networks and digital media brands understand exactly what advertisers expect from these annual industry rituals.

So what have we learned from the 2013 and 2014 Upfront/NewFront events and presentations?

In surveying more than 600 agency and marketer advertising decision makers over the last two years, of whom slightly more than 80% saw Upfront/NewFront presentations either in person or by simulcast, we've collected a broad range of critical insights with regard to advertiser expectations.

Here are some of the high points from 2014:

- Roughly one-third of respondents said the events were better than those of 2013.
- There is still room for new standout entrants, as media decision makers give more weight to the power of individual media brands than they do to a media conglomerate's portfolio.
- The top three topics and themes that resonated most with 2014 attendees when it came to post-event recall were, in order: 1) cross-platform solutions; 2) social media tie-ins and/or extensions; and 3) digital or mobile extensions.
- The top three topics and themes that respondents wanted to hear more about were: 1) measurement issues; 2) innovative applications; and 3) video-on-demand usage and dynamic ad insertions.
- The ideal mix at Upfront/NewFronts events begins with programming, followed by strategy, research and, lastly, talent.

Our research also shows that what drives advertisers to spend more money with particular media partners during the Upfront/NewFronts are costs, audience reach and program quality. To be sure, relationship building among agencies, their clients and media brands are important ancillary benefits to attending the events, even more so than reviewing programming and content.

It will be interesting to see going forward the extent to which the Upfront/NewFront events continue to proliferate — particularly on the digital side — and whether media decision makers will increasingly avail themselves of simulcasts over in-person attendance.

The more substance that television and digital media brands can deliver, the better the advertiser experience they will deliver and the more deals they will make.

The Perceptions Group operates Advertiser Perceptions and Tech Buyer Perceptions. The Group provides research-based customer insight and guidance aimed at strengthening brands, improving customer satisfaction and increasing sales.