

Order More Swag! Survey Says Advertisers Like Upfronts and NewFronts

by P.J. Bednarski, Staff Writer

All those shrimp aren't going to waste.

As reported by eMarketer, new research from [Advertiser Perceptions](#) concludes that 51% of respondents to a survey believe attending upfronts and NewFronts this year had a positive influence on their spending decisions. Last year, that figure was 44%.

Since it's a pretty nebulous question, it might be that the questioners just found 6% more Speak-No-Evil ad executives.

From the chatter I overhear, people at NewFronts, at least, spend quite a lot of energy talking about the showcases they've attended. I wouldn't say it's half the conversations I hear, but it's probably 20%. Which, I'd say, is pretty good.

But really, many aren't sure of NewFronts. Usually a survey that includes a big percentage of respondents who fall in the "don't know" basket is saying something not altogether positive.

This year, 42% of the respondents said their view of NewFronts and upfronts as a useful tool rated no more than a "neutral," a very nice way of saying they're really not sure.

That's down from 55% a year ago. But at the same time, last year only 1% thought upfronts and NewFronts had a negative influence on their ad spend. And this year that number is up to 7%.

Upfronts seem to be a staple in the TV business with broadcast networks and just about everybody in cable. NewFronts is more complicated by the sheer volume of content hawkers, but as a show-and-tell event, it's probably necessary.

It is somewhat aspirational, really. At the last NewFronts many presenters promised--they promised!--they'd actually produce the programming they were talking about on stage. And they promised that on stage, too.

The idea of convening around a subject seems tribal, and when those things start to fall apart, it is a signal of big change. Last week, cable's trade group, the NCTA, cancelled its annual trade show, 65 years old.

Once it was called The Cable Show and could draw up to 30,000. Last year it was renamed the Internet and Television Expo and attracted 8,000.

“In a space marked by innovation and disruption, an organization must have the courage to make more dramatic transformations if it truly wants to adapt and remain a leading voice.” the NCTA said in a statement. Michael Powell, the former FCC chairman and current NCTA president, called the cable show an “anachronism.”

Just last month, in the tradition of ESPN and TLC the NCTA just skipped on what its organizational letters even stood for. Once the National Cable and Telecommunications Association, it awkwardly renamed itself “NCTA-The Internet & Television Association.”

A Website called StopTheCap.com, reports this is the fourth iteration of NCTA, which started as the National Community Television Association and then the National Cable Television Association and then the National Cable and Telecommunications Association. All those names, including this new NCT-Ahh-Whatever, could make good chapter headings in the history book of cable television. There's probably a lesson for the online video business in there.