

## Adobe Marketing Cloud: Do you know what your marketing is doing?

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This case study describes how Adobe Marketing Cloud, a suite of digital marketing software, reached its elusive audience in the USA with an agile communication strategy.

- As an underdog within its competitive set, Adobe needed to take an unconventional approach to building awareness of Adobe Marketing Cloud among its audience of senior-level marketers.
- The team set out to help marketers change their bad habits by challenging them with the question: Do you know what your marketing is doing?
- To reach an elusive audience and position themselves as leaders in the space, the Adobe team put their money where their mouth was with a campaign that both provoked marketers and demonstrated the way forward.
- With hundreds of press mentions of the campaign, the result was a 15% shift in awareness.

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### Campaign details

**Brand owner:** Adobe

**Lead agency:** Goodby Silverstein and Partners

**Budget:** Over 20 million

**Country:** United States

**Industry:** Business-to-business

**Media:** Content marketing, Earned media, buzz, Events and experiential, Internet - display, Mobile and apps, Online video, Public relations, Social media, Sponsorship - event, property, Sponsorship - media, Television

### Executive summary

This case study describes how Adobe Marketing Cloud, a suite of digital marketing software, reached its elusive audience in the USA with an agile communication strategy. As an underdog within its competitive set, Adobe needed to take an unconventional approach to building awareness of Adobe Marketing Cloud among its audience of senior-level marketers. In September 2013, the Adobe team set out to help marketers change their bad habits by challenging them with the question: Do you know what your marketing is doing? To reach an elusive audience and position themselves as leaders in the space, the Adobe team put their money where their mouth was with a campaign that both provoked marketers and demonstrated the way forward. Targeting key moments in marketing culture – when they have their audience's undivided attention – the Adobe team developed effective executions across multiple channels for distributing video 'PSAs' and delivering relevant thought leadership. With hundreds of press mentions of the campaign, the result was a 15% shift in awareness.

## Market background and context

Thanks to technology, the marketing profession is more complicated than ever. From social to e-commerce to analytics, marketers are expected to be jacks-of-all-trades and masters of data. The marketing industry is adding new tricks faster than marketers can think them through, let alone research and adopt new tools to wrangle and act on all the new data.

Long known as a powerhouse in the digital media space, with hero products like Photoshop and Acrobat, Adobe launched an integrated, comprehensive suite of digital-marketing software in October 2012 to enable marketers to measure, personalise and optimise marketing campaigns.

Our first campaign was attention-getting, featuring the headline 'Marketing Is BS.' The idea was that on a good day, marketing can be called 'intuitively driven'. On a bad day, it feels fluffy. On a really bad day, it feels like BS. Our work showed up primarily in print and digital channels and on the home page of [Adobe.com](https://www.adobe.com).

A year after its launch, sales, awareness and brand perceptions among our target senior-level marketers in the US were moving in a healthy direction, with 60% aided awareness<sup>1</sup>. But we knew we had more ground to cover to become a leader in a category in which we were the clear underdog.

Marketers could relate to our truth telling and were responding to the messaging, but they were an elusive bunch. The audience was small in number and difficult to engage.

They were too busy marketing to their consumers to be marketed to.

Dominated by tech titans like Google, IBM, Microsoft, Oracle and Salesforce, our competitive set was outspending us by up to 15 times<sup>2</sup>. Products blurred together and were hard to understand.

As we set out to make a name for ourselves in September 2013, we saw a chink in the competitive armour. Our competitors' conversations came from a place of veiled intimidation, suggesting through dazzling case studies and language about the power of big data that innovation was impossible without their tools. While their communications had all the functional language, there was no humanity or emotion.

As a creative response, we developed a campaign to shake marketers out of complacency and ask them the question: Do you know what your marketing is doing? We paid it off with 'Adobe can help'. We would offer empathy instead of intimidation, through stories that showed we understood their plight.

## Channel objectives

Everything we did from a channel perspective was driven by the ambition to put our money where our mouth was. If we believed in digital marketing, our investments had better reflect that belief. If we touted data and integrated marketing, we needed to walk the walk. If we were going to lead with a provocative challenge to marketers about whether they knew what their marketing was doing, we needed channels to live up to and amplify our desired volume.

The first thing we needed to do was better align our channel investment with our digital-product offering. Even though print was relevant and could deliver scale for our audience, we needed to tip the scale of our media mix to digital platforms.

Our second objective was to focus on channels that matched the breakthrough potential of the creative work. As students of the attention economy, marketers simply weren't going to give their time and energy to anything too traditional. We needed to break out of the conventional mould of print ads and contextual banners, the currency of our last campaign and the category.

Lastly, we needed to unite the voices of the brand to multiply our investment and effort. The paid, social, PR, events and content teams of Adobe were often working off very different briefs, but we knew that better coordination would enable us not only to shout over the crowd but also to find ways to make headlines.

## Connection planning

Here's how we did it. We used our knowledge of marketers' media habits, cultural interests and fears from syndicated, third-party and custom research to map their pain points and touchpoints.

We identified key moments throughout the year when we knew we would have the undivided attention of marketers: from events like Advertising Week to the Super Bowl to the series finale of *Mad Men*. We also kept our finger on the pulse of marketing culture so we could pivot quickly and react to marketing news stories and hot topics as they happened.

We set out to provoke and demonstrate.

1. Get marketers to second-guess their current approach to marketing with the question: Do you know what your marketing is doing?
2. Show marketers the way forward with integrated thought-leadership programs that deliver on the tagline: 'Adobe can help.'

## Implementation and optimisation

### Provoke

#### Advertising Week

To launch the first video 'PSA,' we staged an 'intervention' at the event with the highest number of marketers in the US: Advertising Week in New York City. We convinced Advertising Week organisers to allow a brand video

to serve as the opening introduction to select seminars and events at the conference for the first time ever. As the lights dimmed, the 95,000 attendees were asked: 'Do you know what your marketing is doing?'

In the first week, the 'PSA' had over 4 million video views and Adobe's branded content had over 660,000 social impressions. The message spread through the trades, with article mentions on sites like *Adweek* and *Creativity*.

### *Mad Men*

One of the most highly anticipated events of 2015 was the final season of *Mad Men*, the show about advertising that became a cultural sensation. We reached marketers with our 'PSA' videos as they tuned into the show with Adobe's first major TV buy in ten years. To capitalise on the cultural conversation and expand our reach into the second screen, we used Twitter TV targeting to find *Mad Men* content and push out additional 'Do You Know What Your Marketing Is Doing?' messaging to those who had already been exposed to our video. As a result, we had a social-engagement rate that was over two times the industry benchmark<sup>3</sup>.

### Marketing News

To punctuate the plan throughout the year, we did bursts of high-impact media in the form of takeovers synchronised across key sites. We focussed on dates when marketers would likely be overwhelmed by an influx of new information, such as during SXSW and the Adobe Marketing Summit. We also made sure that we were able to react to new opportunities quickly. Several days after the launch of one of our 'PSAs' (about marketers overreacting to news of a new social network called Woo Woo), news of a real social app called Yo swept the trades. We pivoted quickly, realising that this was a rare case of life imitating art, and aligned our video with the news across all our partners to demonstrate our relevance.

### **Demonstrate**

#### Super Bowl

Adobe created a Super Bowl-specific 'PSA' focused on the fact that people are glued to their mobile phones as they watch the game instead of watching \$4 million TV spots. During the game Adobe created a war room to target marketers in other war rooms. They pushed out the video and Tweeted about everyone's Super Bowl work in real time. To encourage fellow brands in war rooms, we sent baskets of goodies so they could stay fuelled. Adobe also partnered with *USA Today* and, next to the ad-meter results, showcased thought-leadership pieces and buzz tracking to supplement the antiquated tool.

With over 9,000 social shares and 8.6 million video completions, the launch of the Super Bowl 'PSA' was a huge success. Engagement with the Adobe Marketing Cloud Twitter handle increased by 52 times, and there were over 2,500 mentions on social media during the game. The industry made note with numerous articles that mentioned our work, including *Advertising Age*, *Adweek* and the *Wall Street Journal*.

#### Mobile White Papers

One of the biggest things keeping marketers up at night is mobile. They know they need to be there, but they don't know how to get started on creating the ideal mobile experience. To demonstrate the importance of understanding the needs of their audience, we developed a mobile experience to serve the unique needs of marketers.

We created audio versions of white papers that could be easily consumed on mobile during downtime. And to add a little drama, we had Malcolm McDowell narrate them. We delivered 30-second teaser spots via internet

radio and also embedded them into mobile marketing content and social. We published thought-leadership pieces about mobile experience on sites like *Mashable*, *Advertising Age* and *Business Insider*.

The result was 34,000 streams and downloads in just four weeks, 10,000 social shares and press coverage on sites like *Digiday* and *MediaPost*.

## Measurement approach and results

On a macro scale our success is ultimately determined by a twice-yearly brand tracker study. Since the 'Do You Know What Your Marketing Is Doing?' campaign launched in September 2013, we have seen aided awareness jump by 12% and unaided awareness jump by 15%<sup>4</sup>. We also use diagnostic metrics such as video-completion rate and site-engagement rates to make ongoing partner and placement-level optimisations, taking our video-completion rate from 41% to 71% over the course of two years<sup>5</sup>.

Given the difficulty of reaching senior-level marketers in traditional media, we consider PR and social response to be secondary metrics. Not only does earned media help extend the reach of a limited budget, but it's also one of the top ways by which we know we can reach marketers – that is, through their peers and the trades. Although we quantify on a case-by-case basis, we have received hundreds of press mentions on the video 'PSAs', our Advertising Week 'intervention,' our *Mad Men* partnership, the Super Bowl campaign and the mobile white papers.

## Lessons learned

One of the biggest lessons we've learned is the importance of listening to your audience. We set out to empathise with marketers and demonstrate the way forward, but in a way that was attuned to their needs. We wanted to serve instead of sell, help instead of preach – and not add to their already stressful lives. In order to do that, though, we couldn't come to the table with an intractable channel plan and expect marketers to come to us. We were at our best when we were flexible, could react quickly and then capture attention by inserting Adobe into the cultural conversation.

## Footnotes

1. Adobe Marketing Insights and Operations, December 2014
2. Marketing Cloud product and brand-media competitive spend, Kantar Media Strategy, September 2013-March 2015
3. B2B industry benchmark provided by Twitter
4. Adobe Marketing Insights and Operations, December 2014
5. DoubleClick

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