

Future Plans



World-renowned media mathematician, Gilles Santini, shares his thoughts on the future of magazine planning and the role of print optimization

Q. What role do print optimizations currently play in the magazine planning process at a typical advertising agency?

The truth is that most agencies do not rely on print optimizations the same way that they do on broadcast optimizers for a number of reasons. The overall capabilities of print optimizers have been limited to date. For example, most systems force the user to optimize a print schedule based solely on reach and cost, producing unrealistic results, as opposed to a system that evaluates a variety of real-world objectives simultaneously and incorporates the user's expertise.

Secondly, traditional systems do not take into account the ad effectiveness goals of the campaign because those inputs were previously unavailable. There are also technical issues that have not been adequately addressed, like the absence of a good readership duplication model that reflects the way consumers actually interact with print, and time dependent reach and frequency models that realistically represent the way that magazine audiences accrue. Finally, traditional print planning systems are usually stand-alone platforms that have not been integrated with an agency's other functions like flow charting and media buying, which results in a great deal of work at the agency that has to be done by hand.



Gilles Santini
"Media Mathematician"

Q. Is there a new print optimization tool on the horizon?

Yes, leveraging the best of U.S. and E.U. media processing knowledge and experience, we have partnered with Affinity to create **MagPlan**, the next generation of print optimization. We will be beta testing this new tool in June with some of the country's leading agencies, with a rollout scheduled for the Fall planning season. By incorporating Affinity's robust and extensive VISTA database of ad effectiveness norms into the process, this will be the first time that users will be able to optimize based on objectives like ad recall and unique reader actions, while controlling for reach & frequency and cost constraints.

Q. What specific factors have driven the development of MagPlan?

There are two primary drivers. First, a more sophisticated and powerful engine behind the system - a process that employs the use of genetic algorithms, a technique that I have adapted and developed for media planning that properly accounts for readership duplication, allows users to evaluate more than one target at the same time, and most importantly, is able to handle a hierarchy of constraints and preferences that the user dictates based on the objectives of the campaign.

The second driver is technology. Until now, we simply did not have the processing power to evaluate thousands of potential schedules simultaneously in a matter of minutes and rate them for several goals at the same time, against many constraints. MagPlan leverages the latest technologies, enabling users to interface with a Web-based tool that directly accesses the database in real time.

Q. How will the MagPlan user experience differ from traditional models?

With MagPlan, the user is in complete control, bringing their own expertise to the process. They will be able to establish a hierarchy of objectives based on target reach, cost and ad effectiveness that are not mutually exclusive. The user will then create their own set of rules, or preferences, that the system will take into account and remember. For example, if an agency receives a special discount by achieving a certain number of pages with a particular publisher, the user can request that if the same level of effectiveness can be achieved by using those titles, the system should favor those magazines during the optimization process.

In addition, the agency's real rates can be input into the system, with state-of-the-art encryption employed for security purposes. These rates can include variables like frequency discounts, premium position charges, and publisher negotiated terms. The system will then alter the costs associated with a schedule during the optimization process based on the combination of magazines it is evaluating and the real costs associated with the schedule.

Because MagPlan is a Web-based application, the system will be accessible from any computer or through a mobile application that will allow users to receive topline results on their mobile device and then request that the details of the plan be forwarded to their email address. Unlike current systems, MagPlan is designed and scalable for a broad base of users. As a result, the interface will be very intuitive, making extensive training a thing of the past.

Q. What data sources will be accessed through the MagPlan system?

Initially, MagPlan subscribers will be able to access Affinity's American Magazine Study and the combined AMS and Experian Simmons database, both of which will be integrated with Affinity's VISTA database of advertising effectiveness norms. It will also be possible for an agency, on a custom basis, to incorporate additional databases like an advertiser's CRM data or a specific study with unique customer profiles.

Q. Can the MagPlan outputs be integrated with the agency's own internal systems?

Most definitely. The MagPlan system has been designed to be easily integrated with an agency's internal network. MagPlan schedules can be exported into other planning and buying systems in an automated and streamlined way that will eliminate the need to manually transfer the data.

Gilles Santini is CEO of Hippon SAS and Vintco Media Consulting. He studied applied mathematics and advanced statistics in Paris and Yale University. His statistical work is well known within the international media research community and his methods for data fusion and media planning are widely used. He has published numerous papers and authored or co-authored several books on the subject.

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