

## Starcom Breathes Oxygen Into Campaign Media Planning

By Enid Burns, The ClickZ Network, May 13, 2008

What would media buyers do to get into the mind of consumers to see their media engagement? Starcom Worldwide partners with marketing intelligence and planning company Strategic Oxygen to measure consumer interaction across all forms of media. Through the six-year-old collaborative relationship, the two are now using the digital channel as the backbone to integrated, cross-media campaigns.

As a media agency, Starcom Worldwide says it strives to take a consumer-centric approach. "Our job is to work with our clients to define consumer pathways," Latha Sundaram, SVP and global director at Starcom Worldwide, said in a recent interview with ClickZ News. "We find complexities in the B2C [business-to-consumer] space, sources of influence." The media buying agency first started working with Strategic Oxygen in 2002 to help it determine the most relevant media channels to reach consumers.

While some engagement mapping research focuses on digital media, Strategic Oxygen builds media maps from roughly 40 online and offline media sources, ranging from TV to radio and RSS. The team then measures how people connect those components together, said Gale.

"It's like building a DNA book, we track the way people consume complex information," said Michael Gale, principal at Strategic Oxygen. "We track these journeys, building thousands of maps, and absorb information. It may be search, print, TV. We are like mapmakers, but we do marketing maps," he said. Research is conducted globally, to meet the needs of the firm's clients.

Through six years of research, online has emerged as a key channel for most marketers. "Online used to be a colony, now it's a core constitution," Gale said. "DNA really shows how best to combine other activities with online... it's the core of the constitution."

If advertisers have been reticent, Starcom Worldwide has been able to use its research from Strategic Oxygen to drive the point home. "Marketing budgets aren't going up, they're getting smaller. It helps us prioritize," said Sundaram.

Analysis helps campaigns stay more on point. "We've been able to work with Strategic Oxygen to make sure we work with the target audience," said Sundaram. "It's not just about being in the right place, but what's the right message we're delivering, and what's the right message at the right moment."

Close collaboration between the two agencies leads to more than just research. The two have formulated trends they apply to marketers. "Integrate or disintegrate," "Reverse osmosis," and "Search is more than words," are movements they've applied across their agency clients.

"Integrate or disintegrate" translates to the need for companies to adopt new ways to speak to consumers. "Do it the way customers want it, and you're probably going to be successful," said Gale.

"Reverse osmosis" is the realization global leadership is not centered in the U.S. "An idea can truly generate anywhere in the world." Digital trends in particular start in Asia, said Sundaram.

The trend "Search is more than words" marks a need for a wider set of search marketing. "Just having the right word doesn't guarantee the right success," said Gale. "Some markets, forums, and blogs have become a secondary and interesting perspective on search, producing interactive journeys."

Gale suggests laying the right fieldwork, harvesting within the blogosphere and social Web, and then ensuring the pathway is in place. Marketers beware: control is out of their hands. "I think the word control is exactly what people need to avoid. You've got to make the roads, populate the roads... You've got to respond and measure properly, when you talk about control, you can learn very fast what doesn't work those are tough words, marketers like control," he said.

For Starcom Worldwide, Strategic Oxygen provides insight into media buys. "The more data we have and more research and grounding we have... let us follow that journey so we're not just looking at numbers, but really understanding what's happening along the way," said Sundaram.