



AMY WYMAN/COJIN STOUT

BUILDING HUMAN CONNECTIONS

Magazine brands are all about engaging with and inspiring audiences, but how do their teams harness data and insights to boost their value? Enter The Lab to find out

The Lab: an immersive learning experience in which agency planners learn how magazines bring audiences and content together

Data is an incredibly powerful tool, yet sometimes it feels as though we are drowning in its wake instead of turning it to our advantage to shatter the myths that have grown up around media and audiences. Myths such as “people are switching away from advertising”, “magazines are no longer effective” and “people don’t read magazines in print any more”.

That’s why Magnetic – the marketing agency for consumer-magazine media – created The Lab for agency planners. While “The Lab” might conjure up images of boffins in white coats peering into bubbling test tubes, it’s designed to create a forum where planners can explore the craft and influence of magazine media. To discover the alchemy that builds connections with audiences while, ultimately, providing the information to challenge some of those myths that continue to exist.

As the 30 planners who took part in The Lab have discovered, magazine teams use multiple data sources to inform their content, but it’s their insight and intuition that enables them to transform this into formats that connect with, and inspire, audiences. The Lab emphasises that magazines are about building connections as well as clicks, that it’s the human innovation, the magazine conferences and news-rooms, that make the UK’s great magazines what they are.

The Lab ran in two parts. It started in mid-June with a day of testing and experimentation, where expert speakers were challenged and questioned by planners. These speakers included Terri White, the editor-in-chief of *Empire*; Jon

Wilkins, the executive director of Karmarama; and Marcus Rich, the chief executive of Time Inc.

Stage two was more immersive, providing an insight into how magazines bring audiences and expertly crafted content together, in a series of sessions with editorial and commercial teams from *Time Out*, *NME*, *Grazia*, *Glamour*, *Forever Sports*, *Coach*, *The Week*, *Olive* and *Women’s Health*.

THE HEARTBEAT OF THE BRAND

Vizeum’s Stéphanie Persil says of the *Glamour* session: “It was a perfect experience, helping to understand how a magazine is created, from the news conference in the morning to the creation and presentation of content on multiple communication platforms.

“The print version of the magazine is the heartbeat of the brand and at the core of the brand strategy. All other platforms play a role to enhance and continue the reader’s experience. It was amazing to meet so many passionate people, and I felt really privileged to spend 30 minutes with Jo Elvin, *Glamour*’s editor-in-chief, and discover her secrets to constantly find inspiration.”

Total Media’s Tom Sheppey reflects: “Magazine content is written and edited by people with a passion for their subject in a way no machine can replicate. This shared human passion fosters an environment where advertising forms an important part of the content that audiences are seeking new information from.”

CLAUDINE COLLINS MANAGING DIRECTOR, MEDIACOM UK

“The Lab is an immersive learning experience where planners understand how content is created using consumer insight and the editors’ deep understanding of their audience.

“Planners these days have so much to try to keep up to speed with, and the media landscape is so complicated, that putting in place something that makes it more compelling for them to really understand the benefits and strengths of the magazine medium can only be a good thing.”

Anneka Dew at Manning Gottlieb OMD was impressed by the match between brand goals and what magazine brands deliver: “Through their level of understanding of their audiences, magazine brands have long-term, deep relationships with them. This presents a brilliant opportunity for brands to not only learn more about their target audience, but also use the expertise of the editorial team

to craft content that truly resonates. Consumers completely trust these magazine brands and have a high level of warmth and affinity with them.”

This is an experience that is again supported by the data. Magazines are great at generating “inspiration” and stimulating conversations among audiences more than any other media environment (Source: “Rules of Attraction” study, 2015).

CLIENT OBJECTIVES, CUSTOMER PLATFORMS

The Lab also served as a practical demonstration of the creativity that results from close collaboration between editorial and commercial teams.

Chris Donnelly from Mindshare saw this in action during a session with Time Inc’s *NME*: “It added a lot of context to how they approach an agency brief and where ideas are really generated. This stood out as giving a publisher viewpoint on how they tackle client objectives and marry their audiences and platforms.”

This bespoke and engaged approach to client objectives and solutions proved a particular eye-opener for planners. It also illustrates perfectly the craft and skill, aligned to the science, that keeps magazine media in rude health.

Following the success of The Lab, we will take some of the issues raised and explore them in greater depth, with a broader audience, at Magnetic’s annual half-day SPARK event in London on 20 September.

Come along and be inspired.

SUE TODD CHIEF EXECUTIVE, MAGNETIC

“Our industry has always been challenged to measure the value of the quality of media environments, as opposed to reach, which feels of increasing importance in the digital age. Can we really find ways to ensure that, alongside delivery of impressions, we consider the optimum environments for brands? How can we verify a claim to deliver both connections and clicks? How can we value media where advertising is welcomed, as opposed to actively avoided?”

The magazine sector is investing in creating metrics that matter, offering better data to make sound choices. But we also all know that aspects of delivering brilliant marketing need a more human interpretation. Everyone welcomes data that informs and creates less uncertainty, but we also know editors are infinitely more capable of making nuanced choices about what truly resonates and

inspires. That’s why more advertisers are interested in accessing those skills for branded content and why well-edited, original content endures.

The Lab aims to open up these conversations and challenges to the next generation of planners. We want to allow for real immersion with the content-creators, artists and producers who occupy and work across a vast array of channels. The job of an editor has never been so varied and inspiring, which is why the individuals and the brands remain so influential. If you’re into film, do you trust a magazine columnist’s opinion, or a blogger’s? Same for fashion, food, cycling, rugby, music. I love data that reveals a new insight. But I love Lorraine Candy or Phil Alexander or Dylan Jones’ take on the world more, and it’s encouraging that a new generation of planners feel that too.”

