

Time to step up to the plate

 By [Margie Carr](#)

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*Despite international research showing exciting growth trends in out-of-home (OOH) spend, to allocate funds to it remains difficult and challenging for most marketing managers, media planners and strategists, says **Margie Carr**, managing director of In Touch Media, as she gives her view on why OOH is not living up to expectations.*

Allocating a percentage of an above-the line-advertising budget to OOH is a tough decision for most, but with the scattering of audiences across TV channels and the slow decline of print media, OOH should be an integral part of any above-the-line (ATL) advertising campaign. Yet it is not.

By far the worst public relations (PR) for OOH media is the state of outdoor media structures. For all the hard work and investment that goes into neatly finished outdoor products, it is very frustrating to see the products that do the exact opposite, giving OOH a bad name.



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It only takes one unpainted roadside billboard with a torn or faded artwork on display to kill the medium as a prospective investment for future advertisers. And our audiences will drive past sites like this day after day, imprinting that negative message about the medium. This has to change if we want to be taken seriously.

Information needed

OOH is notoriously behind other ATL advertising options when it comes to proper information on target audiences and their products on offer. Media owners must make the effort to do their own research on footfall/traffic counts for each of their sites. Accurate information must be supplied on demographics. This must be communicated clearly on all rate cards, along with proper mapping, and proper photographs of the OOH on offer.

OOH media is complex to buy, due to the fact that there are a huge variety of products on offer, and they are offered by a plethora of different media owners. On top of this, each media owner has their own sales force on the road, and clients become inundated in an effort to find the right information before adding OOH to their budgets.

Clients and/or their appointed media agencies will find the best value with least time wasted if they appoint a specialist media agency to do this for them, as specialist media agencies will be able to interpret their briefs immediately, and will know which of their media suppliers to consult for the campaign. Getting professional advice will definitely increase the future spend on OOH, as it will make information more accessible, and get OOH into budget decisions at an early stage of planning.

A media planner who receives the same site from various 'media owners' is bound to develop mistrust in the medium. As an industry, media owners need to be aware of who is marketing their sites, and ensure good representation of their sites, at the same rack rates, so as to avoid distrust in OOH. I have met too many planners who shy away from OOH as a result of this.

On the upside, OOH media as a whole has stepped up to the plate in accepting not only shorter-term bookings, but also in being open to pre-booking. These two seemingly small changes have made a huge difference to planners. It makes the OOH products much more accessible and planning less restrictive. Being able to book and plan in advance, has brought new life to marketing plans, and increased sales on OOH media.

We will be able to substantially increase spend on OOH if media owners prioritise the following key areas:

- Commit to a Code of Conduct as an industry and stick to it.
 - Decide on annual rate card rates based on value of products.
 - Remove old stock that is no longer in use, as a highest priority.
 - Upgrade all stock that is in the market place, as a highest priority.
 - Have a strategy in place on how to display unsold stock, and enforce it.
 - Do professional photographs of all stock, taken at prime viewing time to show audience.
 - Get audited audience figures for all media and include this on rate cards.
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- Review prices in areas where there is an oversupply of OOH media advertising.

I believe in the value of OOH media, and am excited to be part of the growing investment in this very exciting, constantly changing advertising option. So let's step up to plate together and take OOH media to where it belongs.

ABOUT MARGIE CARR

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