



Q&A with Essence & Google: key takeaways from a programmatic journey

Published
July 2018

The 2018 Programmatic Summit took place earlier this year in Darling Harbour, Sydney. Below is a recap of an interview with Julia Donnan from Google Australia and Anna Stoyanova from Essence, hosted by Google's Rhys Williams. The Q&A explored their perspectives on programmatic with a focus on partnership and the recent launch of Google Home in Australia.

think with **Google**

Four years ago, Google Marketing went all-in on programmatic advertising with an ambitious goal at the time to buy a minimum of 60% of its digital media programmatically.

As part of that initiative, the brand has also focused on partnering with agencies that are eager to put data into action and experiment with the latest ad tech.

Fast-forward to 2017: one of Google's established partners [Essence](#) was crucial in [launching Google Home in Australia](#). To hear more about their partnership, I conducted a panel interview with Anna Stoyanova, Essence's VP and head of product AUNZ, and Julia Donnan, Google Australia and New Zealand's head of hardware marketing, at the 2018 Programmatic Summit. Our conversation touched on the importance of context, opportunities to merge innovation with automation, and how Google has used Programmatic Guaranteed in its own campaigns, including the Google Home and the Pixel 2 launches in Australia.

Rhys: A lot of talk about programmatic revolves around innovative ad placements and personalised messaging. How have each of you seen this work on a campaign level?

Julia: Taking a step back, we launched Google Home in Australia as the first smart home device on the market. That was pretty different to how it launched elsewhere around the world, where some of our competitors had beaten us to the punch. So we not only had to drive awareness of this new category in the market, but because Google Home is such a personal product, we also had to show Aussies why this device was relevant to their daily lives.

“Both online and offline, we’ve seen how applying a contextual layer to our creative leads to better results, but we’ve been able to streamline the process even more on digital with programmatic.”

Julia Donnan, Head of Hardware Marketing, Google Australia and New Zealand



Programmatic helped us drive a more hyper-focused campaign on two levels. For one, it helped us find the right audience and deliver our creative to them at scale in premium placements across relevant websites and apps. But the second level was where programmatic really helped us deliver on our strategy. Because our key audience was time-crunched parents, we used programmatic to serve up hyper-relevant ads that showcased the benefit of Google Home in the moments that mattered to them.

For example, they might see a Masthead banner in the morning showing how Home can help them check the weather or optimise their morning commute. And while listening to Spotify on the commute home, they might see a banner ad showing how to listen to their favourite Spotify playlist with Home by simply using their voice.

We’ve also extended our hyper-contextual approach offline. One example is when we ran six-second bumpers in cinemas that were directly related to movie trailers people just watched. Both online and offline, we’ve seen how applying a contextual layer to our creative leads to better results, but we’ve been able to streamline the process even more on digital with programmatic.

Anna: When approaching a campaign, programmatic has made us rethink three things in particular:

1. **Insights**

We've put more focus on bringing our creative and media teams together to collaborate from the start and reorganising our data so it's more actionable in campaign strategy.

2. **Measurement**

From the beginning, we think about which metrics are most relevant based on our campaign goals and then monitor and make adjustments in a single platform to get a holistic view of our media buys.

3. **Creative**

Dynamic ad creative is a necessity. We know that a single, static message can't possibly reach the right person in the right place at the right time.

Beyond performance, programmatic has an important role to play in brand marketing. How has that figured into your campaigns?

Julia: As marketers, we understand the importance of premium placements and their effect on consumers' perceptions of brands. But in Australia—where premium video placements are harder to secure than other places around the globe—it was harder to incorporate this part of our plan into our programmatic buys.

The launch of Programmatic Guaranteed helped us guarantee high-quality placements with the flexibility we needed to drive the right deals for our campaigns, get a single view of this user, and layer on our own targeting and remarketing lists. We tested Programmatic Guaranteed for the first time for our [Pixel campaign in 2016](#), and we've consistently used it in our marketing ever since.

Anna: To be honest, Programmatic Guaranteed was a tougher sell for us when it first launched. We still wanted to do everything in real time and pull all the levers ourselves; we didn't like the idea of handing back some of the controls to publishers. But we realised it had a huge role to play in securing valuable inventory, which, like Julia mentioned, is particularly valuable in the Australian market.

“For advertisers, bringing everything under one roof on a single platform is beneficial whichever way you look at it, and Programmatic Guaranteed deals are helping close that circle. They give us better control of overall frequency, measurability, and testing opportunities.”

Anna Stoyanova, VP, Head of Product,
Australia & NZ at Essence



For advertisers, bringing everything under one roof on a single platform is beneficial whichever way you look at it, and Programmatic Guaranteed deals are helping close that circle. They give us better control of overall frequency, measurability, and testing opportunities. I personally love the idea of having one invoice at the end of the month, and I know our media and finance teams love the efficiency, too.

There was a lot of discussion around brand safety in 2017, and Google as a brand was no exception. How have you addressed this? And do you feel like you've made good progress?

Anna: From an agency perspective, there are two ingredients to it. For one, applying technology and best practices to ensure brand safety is critical. We mainly use Google's tools as well as third-party tools such as MOAT and Integral, and we have a rigorous QA process and lots of checklists for our campaign set-up.

Second, it's important to continually monitor and report once a campaign is live. Bringing visibility and transparency to the topic is key, which is why we openly talk about what's working, what needs improving, and how we'll move forward based on what we see in our weekly reports. This helps us get proactive about preventing issues, and it closes the feedback loop for our technology providers wondering how their tech is performing in the market.

For the last question, let's get a prediction from you both: What will we be up here talking about next year?

Julia: The thing that's been on the top of my mind for the past few years is bringing programmatic to offline. We've seen the benefits of this buying model online, but frankly, the way we buy and measure offline media is still pretty archaic. The possibilities for programmatic in TV and OOH ads are huge, both for efficiencies in buying and delivering more relevant and interesting ads to our consumers. It doesn't make sense to have a static billboard sitting in the same place for a month—there are huge opportunities in making the most of this inventory for the media seller, the buyer, and the consumer.

Anna: Everything changes so quickly that I tend to believe crystal balls are very blurred. Today we're talking about AI, but a year ago that wasn't really on the agenda—it still belonged in a sci-fi movie. That just goes to show how wide and intriguing the possibilities are, but I personally think that AI will still be top of mind with developments such as custom algorithms being more prevalent in a year's time.

Check out more from the 2018 Programmatic Summit [here](#).

Rhys Williams

Director, Media Platforms, AUNZ at Google

