

The only thing automatic ad buying needs now is the human touch

By [Warren Ravinsky](#)

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Working in the digital ad space, I am as excited by the disruption and new possibilities that automation has brought to the industry. The talent and the technological strides we've witnessed in the space of a year has been nothing short of staggering.



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Programmatic makes ad buying significantly more efficient and has created opportunities for brands that we couldn't have thought possible five years ago. Imagine a world where a car dealership can deliver a message to a prospective buyer for the exact make and model they're looking for (in their neighbourhood), the minute that they start doing research on it. A fashion brand can serve a prospective customer an ad based on what the weather is like at their planned holiday destination. Everything is possible with a combination of the correct data providers and skills.

But as impressive as all that sounds, smart technology without the human touch can be, to put it bluntly, *stupid*. Programmatic buying is a tool and like any tool, it's only as effective as the person who wields it.

Two-pronged approach

Content and channels can be managed in a wholly automated way, but it shouldn't be. And even if it isn't, decisions often come down to guesswork and trial-and-error. Agencies are doing themselves and their clients a disservice if they don't follow the two-pronged approach of technology and consultation working together.

Anyone can create an ad campaign, but it takes a village to make a sale. You need a large community of experienced digital marketers, agencies, data management platforms and advisors to achieve the exact manual configuration needed to close the loop. Companies are still too focused on *how* programmatic works, while ignoring *why* it works.

Advertising 101 tells us that we should serve the right message to the right audience, in the right place, at the right time. Too often the parameters for the right place and right time are too wide. If you are in the off-road vehicle market, you can serve a message to a client who has browsed the web looking at an article about the latest 4x4. It's not a bad idea, but that client could easily be a 15-year old with an interest in off-roading and zero buying power.

In the hands of the right people

If you serve the same message to a client, with pre-approved finance, who has already sent queries to a car dealership for a specific 4x4 model that day, you are much more likely to get not only a click but a sale. Analytics is only as good as the data you're examining. The right platform will be able to provide you with third- and first-party data sets, as well as the depth of their experiences in a completely open and transparent way.

You can compare an online ad campaign to investment management. You could also probably throw caution to the wind and manage it on your own, but it's so much more effective (and profitable) when there's a skilled fund manager at the helm.

Don't be dazzled by what technology can do. The real eye-opener will be what technology can do in the hands of the right people.

ABOUT WARREN RAVINSKY

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