

DMMA Publisher Conference raises debate

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The Digital Media & Marketing Association (DMMA) held its first ever Annual Publisher Conference last week in Cape Town and Johannesburg. Sponsored by WoodWing and APS, the conference tackled some of the thornier issues in online publishing such as frustration with measurement standards, a lack of transparency and accurate spend data at the media buying level, and the need for publishers to differentiate their properties using more than just metrics.

Jarred Cinman, chair of the DMMA, says: "The key takeout established from the conference on the day is that publishers need to work closely with media planners to offer attractive, competitive inventory to advertisers. Locally, digital publishers are still not earning their share of adspend for various reasons, and as an industry we have to work harder to drive this spend up. Conferences of this nature - where we gather together to identify the obstacles and potential solutions - are therefore critical."

Chris Naidoo, commercial manager of Independent Online and one of the delegates who attended the conference, agrees: "It was great to see members from all touch points in the digital media eco-system present at the conference, and extremely interesting to hear viewpoints about challenges and opportunities faced by those in the industry - from media agencies, advertisers and digital publishers."

The conference sparked a great deal of conversation on social media, with the hashtag #DMMApublisher trending nationally on the day. Matthew Buckland, MD of Creative Spark, summed up the general audience sentiment succinctly: "In an industry where there are radical platform and business model changes and challenges, the need for online publishers, suppliers and others involved to sit down, share strategies, and understand the environment has never been more critical. This conference could not have been more needed or timeous - we look forward to this event becoming a regular, important and permanent calendar fixture for the online publishing industry."

One of the DMMA's chief objectives for 2013 was to reconnect with its publisher members. Tim Spira, Head of Publishers for the DMMA, explains: "We set up a publisher council which meets regularly to discuss the challenges and opportunities we face as an industry. One such opportunity was to create a forum for publishers to share insights with - and learn from - their peers, suppliers and customers. We look forward to continuing the conversations we started last week and making this a regular event on our annual calendar."

The conference was well-attended in both Cape Town and Johannesburg, and speakers addressed issues such as:

- Cross-platform measurement
- A media planner's perspective on buying digital
- The advertising eco-system
- The impact of advertising exchanges and real-time bidding on publishers' business models
- In the age of social media and sponsored content, when advertisers are increasingly producing and distributing their own content, are publishers at risk of becoming irrelevant?
- Can local publishers compete in a globalised marketplace dominated by the likes of Google and Facebook?
- How can publishers ensure that they differentiate themselves and become indispensable to advertisers?
- Native advertising - skirting the line between advertising and editorial?
- Developments in digital publishing, monetisation and analytics
- The status of digital audience measurement in South Africa

A full list of keynote speakers and their presentations can be found [here](#).

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