



Greco Needs to Repair DMA's Relationship With AIM

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Last week, I attended a reunion of former colleagues from Jupiter Research. I hadn't been to one of these events in years, and it was great getting back in touch with old friends. I noticed that the discussions last week focused much less upon what we did back in the day, and much more on what each of us is doing now. I'll take that as a positive sign that things are getting better in the interactive space.

One of the few backward looking topics that evening focused on the rise and fall of the Association of Interactive Marketing (AIM), the interactive division of the DMA. A few of us were wondering what had happened to AIM. Many of us know or have met Andy Sernovitz, Ben Issacson and Kevin Noonan – respectively the three executive directors of AIM. We can all remember some friction between AIM and the DMA. But few could remember what had happened to the organization that at one time was an important part of the interactive community.

As most of you probably know, John Greco has been brought on board as CEO of the DMA. Some of us are hoping that he will focus some of his brainpower towards taking AIM to the next level. I had the opportunity to speak with Mr. Greco recently, and believe that he has an excellent understanding of multi-channel marketing as well as the interactive space. I can't predict where he will take the DMA. But based upon our discussions, I am certainly optimistic. With that as a background, I thought it might be helpful to share my thoughts on the future direction of the organization – the Chapell View on AIM.

1. Redefine AIM's mission – What do we want AIM to be now that we as an industry are all grown up? Now that times are getting better, I think it makes sense to re-evaluate what the interactive community needs from their trade association. Here are a few objectives that I came up with. If you have others you'd like to share, I definitely want to hear them.
 - Set and enforce standards and best practices
 - Provide the interactive community with a legislative voice
 - Search for synergies between online and traditional marketing
 - Maximize revenue opportunities for member companies
 - Conduct research demonstrating the value of the interactive channel.

Some of these aren't all that new. AIM has always tried to build consensus around best practices, and should continue to do so. While others are newer ideas. For example, I believe that AIM should champion the synergies between online and

traditional marketing channels. Many people in the industry can say that an offline campaign is much more effective when combined intelligently with an online campaign. Most can explain the 2/3/8 principle. But not nearly enough of us are putting those principles into practice. I'd like to see AIM begin to champion online/offline research. Of course, that would require working closely with the DMA – which brings me to my next point.

2. Repair the relationship between AIM and the DMA – It's been well documented that AIM and the DMA have had a challenging relationship. The flap over the email best practices document last year might have signified a new low in that relationship. But I don't think I'm creating news by suggesting that it's been a difficult marriage almost from day one.

I don't want to re-open any old wounds. Instead, I want to suggest that with new leadership coming into both organizations, now is the time to heal, rebuild and redefine the relationship. The good news is that many within both organizations clearly recognize this opportunity, and there seems to be a renewed willingness on the part of both organizations to work together. Specifically, there seems to be recognition of the following:

- Interactive marketing is in some ways different than offline direct marketing.
- Because of this, interactive marketing has different standards and encompasses different challenges.
- Therefore, there will be times when AIM needs to have a slightly different solution in order to meet those challenges.

I'm not saying that AIM needs to own certain issues; I am saying that AIM needs to be positioned as a complimentary voice within the DMA regarding those issues. The DMA needs to cut AIM some slack, and AIM needs to use that newfound freedom wisely. Otherwise, they may as well just fold AIM into the DMA entirely.

3. Diversify AIM Membership – The membership list that's currently posted on the AIM site has too many vendors, and very few DMA members. Without representation from marketers, almost everything that AIM does is by definition one-sided. For example, how can AIM help members distinguish Adware from Spyware without obtaining input from significant numbers of marketers and publishers in addition to vendors? Similarly, I've proposed that AIM foster synergies between online and offline marketing. That task becomes somewhat easier if we actually have a few DMA members participating in the discussion.
4. Build Bridges between AIM and other trade associations – My feeling is that there have been too many turf battles between AIM and other industry groups. Remember when you were growing up, and mom lectured you about working together with your brothers and sisters in order to get the job done quicker and better? Well why not just apply that sage advice here. Groups like the IAB, IAPP,

OPA, ESPC, and others should be embraced. AIM doesn't need to have a monopoly on research, best practices, and revenue opportunities in order to be effective. AIM can work with these groups to increase learnings and enhance its credibility.

We have an opportunity to grow our industry. Good times are coming, and we can help turn them into better times. I'm writing this during an election year. In that spirit, I would encourage everyone reading this – DMA members, AIM members, IAPP, OPA, IAB, or none of the above – to participate in this discussion. What do you want AIM to be? What don't you want AIM to be? Even if you don't care about AIM, if you are reading these words you probably have a vested interest in the interactive space. There are many challenges ahead of us, and we need all the help we can get. We have an opportunity to grow our industry. I've sketched out my plan. I'd love to hear yours...

Chapell Bio –

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