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## NBC to Host Its First Digital Out-of-Home Upfront

**Meeting This Month Comes as Broadcast Upfront Still in Question**

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NEW YORK (AdAge.com) -- In a sign of the emerging power of TV outside the home, NBC Universal will hold what media buyers are likening to an "upfront" presentation for its digital out-of-home assets Jan. 16. The media company is hoping to get more advertisers to consider NBC for placing ads on TV screens in supermarkets, near gas-station pumps, in taxi cabs and arenas, among other places. Set to be held in Studio 8H, the NBC presentation will address approximately 200 advertisers and media buyers.



Mark French, senior VP-general manager, NBC Everywhere  
Photo Credit: NBC/Barbara Nitke

It's telling that NBC has chosen this year to roll out its first out-of-home upfront. As the writers strike drags on, it's growing more likely that the big broadcast networks will pull back from their glitzy May presentations for their prime-time schedules. Should the strike, which began Nov. 5, continue past late January, it will eat into the networks' development season, where they devise comedy and drama pilots to show to advertisers. It may be in many networks' interest to highlight media properties other than traditional TV programs.

### **Yahoo's early pitch**

In the past, broadcast-network rivals have held presentations to advertisers early in the year in hopes of getting marketers to commit dollars well in advance of the May presentations. In February of last year,

for example, Yahoo held a meeting for marketers, telling them they should factor the web portal into their early planning and described how the Yahoo could help them reach targeted audiences centered on defined areas of interest. The move was viewed as an effort to capture dollars well before TV networks, which are increasingly putting more programming online.

NBC's out-of-home upfront, however, is seen as a testament to the growing interest advertisers have in reaching consumers more closely in places where they intend to make an actual purchase.

"The concept has been there for a while, and people are still trying to perfect it," said Steve Kalb, senior VP-director of broadcast at Interpublic Group of Cos.' Mullen. "There's something intriguing" about reaching a consumer at the moment they are interested in buying products, and have money in hand to do so, he added. Ads that run on TVs in particular places could remind consumers about certain goods or even make offers relevant to their shopping experience. Mullen has talked to NBC about its digital out-of-home assets, he said, and "there is some interest [from clients]. We need to do a deeper dive and see how it fits into the plan."

### **3 billion impressions predicted**

NBC has established partnerships that allow it to place its video content in more than 10 different kinds of venues, said Mark French, senior VP-general manager, NBC Everywhere, NBC Universal's digital out-of-home media unit. In 2008, he said, content on the screens -- and the ads that run adjacent to it -- should reach people more than 3 billion times. "There are very strategic, thinking agencies right now that are looking to do deals basically right after the event," Mr. French said.

Digital signage could bring in revenue of more than \$2.5 billion by the end of 2010, according to a recent report from market-research firm Carmel Group. Other major media companies are also looking to get into the space. In September, CBS Corp. purchased SignStorey, a company that distributes programming and advertising to retail stores, for \$71.5 million in cash.

SignStorey's plasma screens are available at grocery chains nationwide, including Albertsons, Price Chopper, Pathmark and Bi-Lo, and are strategically located at deli counters and/or in the produce sections of supermarkets. The deal helps CBS run pieces of its programming and promotions in stores while people shop, and also can bring advertisers along for the ride.

### **Buyers: better measurement needed**

Media buyers say the out-of-home screens require better measurement. NBC's Mr. French said the company has taken pains to build a network that reaches a "captive measurable audience," or one that only measures the people who get value from seeing the content -- such as a person who watches an NBC movie-review segment in the back of a New York cab without turning the presentation off. NBC has also tried to put in place a system that can use both very recognizable national content as well as relevant programming from local stations in specific geographic regions.

This current NBC presentation is just a "reaction to the marketplace," Mr. French said. The meeting allows advertisers and buyers to determine "what makes sense for their brand, for their agency."

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