

essence**mediacom**



Building Beyond Legacy.

Media and Creative Planning
for the Modern Agency

For a few years now, the same thing keeps coming up as one of the main impediments to marketers taking full advantage of the technological advances of the last decade: silos. Data in one, media in another, measurement in yet another, and creativity all by itself.

As an industry, we have been talking at length about the need to break these barriers down. The thinking always goes: If we can bring these disciplines together, we'd have much more effective advertising with easily measurable ROI. Media can no longer be thought of as simply a delivery mechanism, of course. And there are endlessly creative ways to approach media.

But the issue is not just about silos across disciplines — obviously media and creative should work in tandem toward the same goals. The fact is our industry still relies too heavily on both creative and media plans beginning with TV ads and mini-films and then parceling those out into shorter versions in digital media.

These types of outputs will always be an important part of any campaign. But as an industry, we are limiting ourselves when we use them as the starting point, or the thing around which everything else is built. We're in a period of unprecedented opportunity and expansion in terms of communications. But ultimately, the power and potential of creative to build brands is constrained by approaches that are still based around making 30- and 60-second mini movies.

In other words, the industry is still using legacy and linear thinking at a time when experiences, technologies, communities and platforms — too many to count, really — are emerging everywhere simultaneously. Continuing to approach advertising with legacy practices leads to suboptimal digital experiences and it too often prevents us from trying new things.

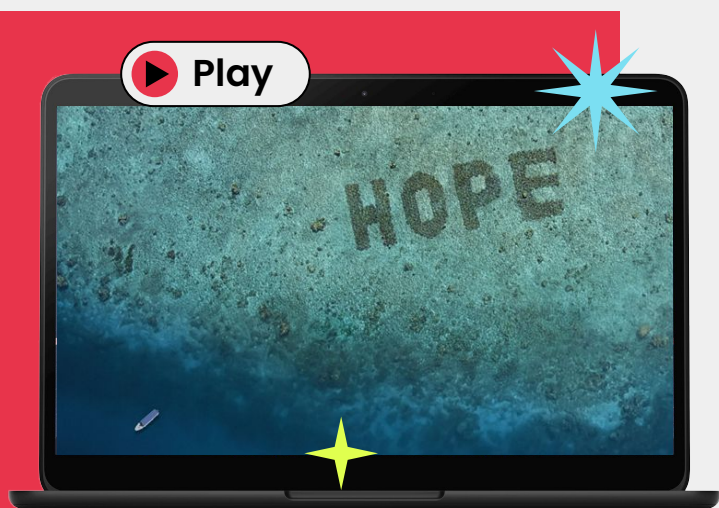
As we build EssenceMediacom, we see our role — because we can use our deep knowledge of how modern platforms and ecosystems work — as being a steward that uses our analytical chops to help design better media and creative that aligns with where people and categories are now, and where they're going to be. Building our agency this way enables us to design media and creative optimized for the algorithms that drive modern communications. It also works for clients because, among other things, we can continually iterate on our plans and executions to produce better return on investment.

This is what we mean when we talk about the fundamental integration of media and creative thinking, enabled by technology and data. It brings new ways to deliver the message to any audience; it brings innovative creative ideation; and ultimately, it brings better results for clients. In short, this sort of integration drives creative transformation.

And more and more clients are demanding it.

Naturally, this thinking can manifest in many ways, and we've created work that already bears this out. One client might need an influencer marketing effort. For another, the target consumer might best be reached via performance content. Maybe addressable TV is the best fit. Or a tie-in with esports and gaming. Maybe it's all of the above. Or maybe it's something that hasn't even been created, something that's never been done — **like building a coral reef for** Sheba to raise awareness of sustainable fishing.

What follows are a handful of case studies between Essence and MediaCom that illustrate the innovative and creative thinking we are building into EssenceMediacom.



Media and creative integration, even in programmatic

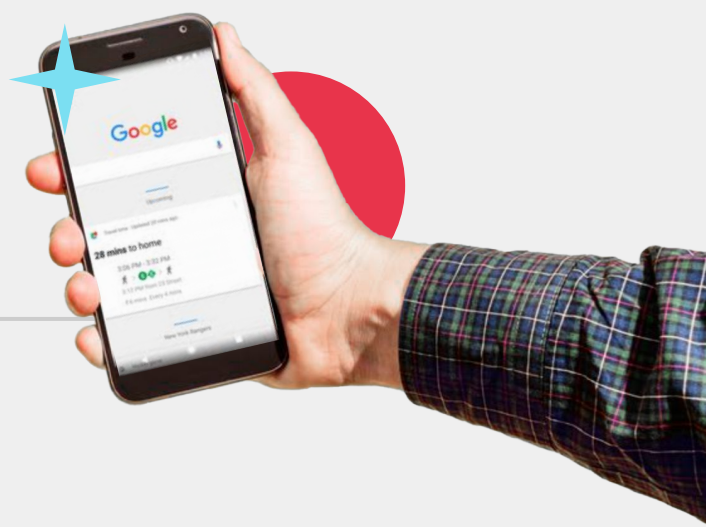
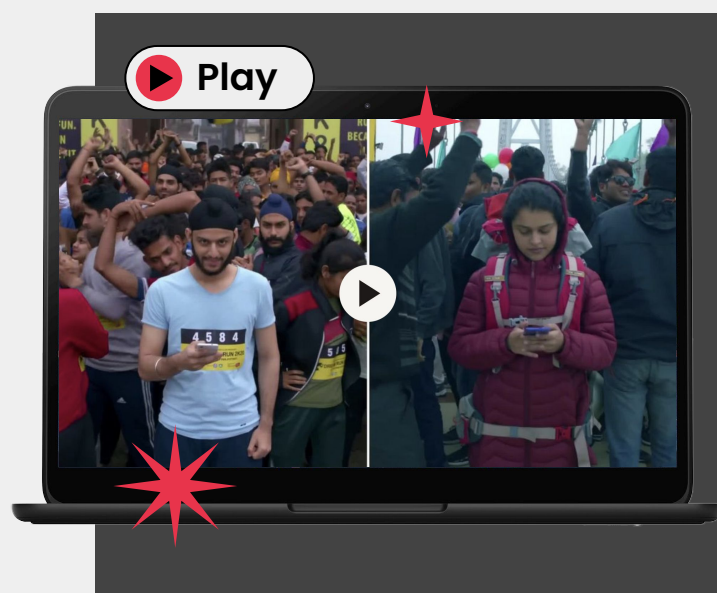
The words programmatic and creative typically aren't associated with one another — unless someone's bemoaning that the former is ruining the latter. But programmatic and automation are the new realities. One of the promises of automation is that it should free up time and mental space for the humans in the organization to focus on creative strategic direction. And bringing creative thinking to programmatic ad delivery can produce powerful results.

Consider a campaign for Google Assistant in India. Google's search bar is the go-to destination for queries, but a large portion of India's population prefers voice to typing. This would seem a natural fit for the voice-activated Google Assistant, but how could it market the product to an audience of new users who weren't typing questions into desktop or mobile devices?

With a target audience of Hindi-first users of all genders age 18-44, Google turned to Gaana, India's most-used music streaming service. More specifically, it targeted those who had previously set permissions to use voice commands on the service.

Users already used to interacting with music-streaming service Gaana via voice were greeted with the following prompt in Hindi: "Hello! It's Google Assistant. Would you like to learn more about how you can search using just your voice? Say yes." Those who said "yes" were taken to a voice search demo where they could use voice search to look up cricket scores, weather, and nearby restaurants. Without ever looking at their phone or clicking anywhere on screen, users not only got to go hands-free, but actually use Google Assistant. If the user responded negatively, the ad quickly returns the listener to their music or podcast.

The ads, which ran across India's most-used music-streaming platform Gaana, reached over 5 million people with 263,823 absolute engagements.



A whole new (virtual) world

With two-thirds of American adults unable to answer basic personal finance questions, Ally Bank wanted to attack the root of the problem and bring financial education to a younger generation. But public service announcements and dry educational information weren't likely to have much of an impact on the middle-school students the company wanted to reach. Ally tapped four young entrepreneurs that it had initially discovered through a partnership with the Sean Anderson Foundation, a nonprofit founded by multi-platinum Detroit rapper Big Sean.

Their solution: Fintropolis, a virtual world of money in one of the audience's favorite destinations: "Minecraft." Fintropolis uses real-world scenarios to introduce and familiarize students and users to financial concepts and pulled off the near-impossible task of making things like taxes, budgeting, and debt fun. The company also partnered with leading influencers on Twitch and ran sponsored content in Time magazine. (The story behind the campaign also generated coverage [in Fast Company](#) and other publications that highlighted the DEI aspect of the effort.) To date, Fintropolis has been downloaded over 3 million times and is available for both "Minecraft" and "Minecraft: Education Edition," the latter of which has been taken up by over 7,000 schools across the U.S.



Media as the message, not just the canvas

For the launch of its Pixel 6 phone, Google decided to highlight its Real Tone software, which uses imaging technology to ensure that mobile cameras can accurately capture different skin tones. Rather than launching an ad campaign ticking off product features and benefits, Google wanted to tell a story highlighting image equity through social activism past, present, and future.

To tell the story, Google needed partners with the history, credibility, and creativity to carry out the idea at scale. The New York Times, with its journalistic integrity and a legacy of covering activism, fit the bill.

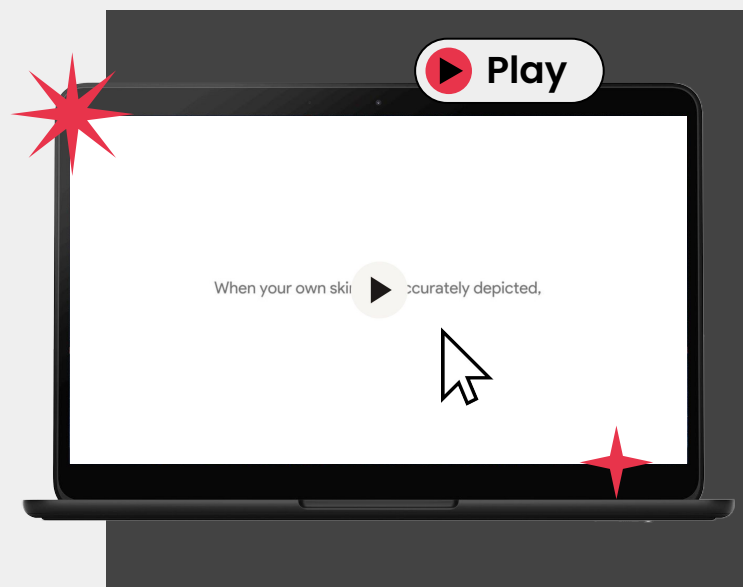
After teaming up with T Brand Studio, New York Times Advertising's content studio, Google turned to HIV/AIDS activist Phill Wilson, labor activist Dolores Huerta, and civil rights activist Ruby Bridges as well as photographers Kennedy Carter, Mengwen Cao, and Ricardo Nagaoka. Journalists on the editorial side of the New York Times were also given Pixel 6 phones to use in three relevant photojournalism pieces.

Over the course of several months in Q4 2021, Pixel and New York Times Advertising distributed stories across every touch point the Times had to offer.

Across the Atlantic, in the U.K., Google partnered with Channel 4 to launch "Highlife," the first Black British reality show. The idea was to create a show that would change the face of mainstream culture, both in front of and behind the camera, increasing positive representation of Black Britain by creating a four-part reality show featuring a cast of ambitious, glamorous trendsetters.

The campaign also developed the accompanying five-part social series "Picture This," where cast members explained what concepts like "tradition" meant to them by taking a picture on their Pixel. This gave cast members extra space to discuss their life experiences and worldviews outside of the reality show format.

For contextual ads and organic social, Google asked Black British comedy talent questions about their lives and culture that aligned with the Pixel 6's progressive nature. All elements of the partnership worked to hero the show and further promote positive representation.



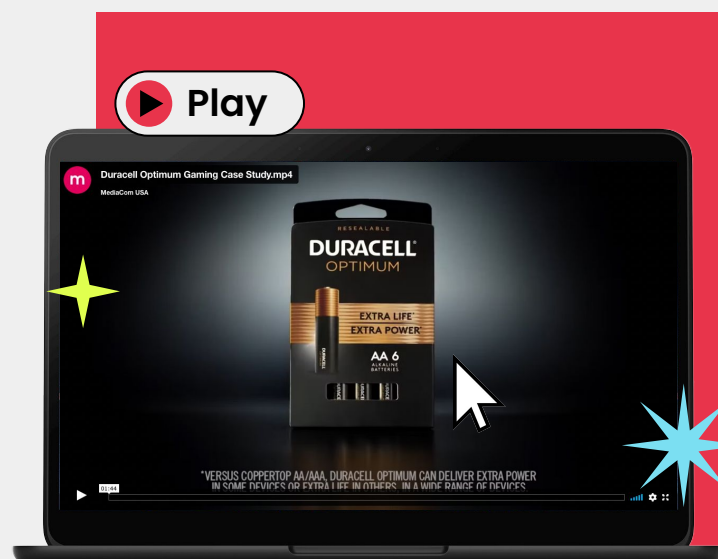
Make the marketing solve a problem

Batteries are necessary for everyone from first responders to gamers. But how do you differentiate one battery brand from another. Duracell has had a long history of doing just that, whether with its “copper top” product design that set it apart from the competition or being the first battery brand to advertise on TV.

TV advertising, however, wasn’t going to do the trick when the company wanted to get in on the gaming market.

With the next generation of consoles dropping during the 2020 holiday season, Duracell saw an opportunity to educate gamers on the benefits of upgrading to their most premium product, Duracell Optimum. Gamers find nothing more frustrating than having game play interrupted to switch out batteries. But they also find interruptive advertising frustrating as well.

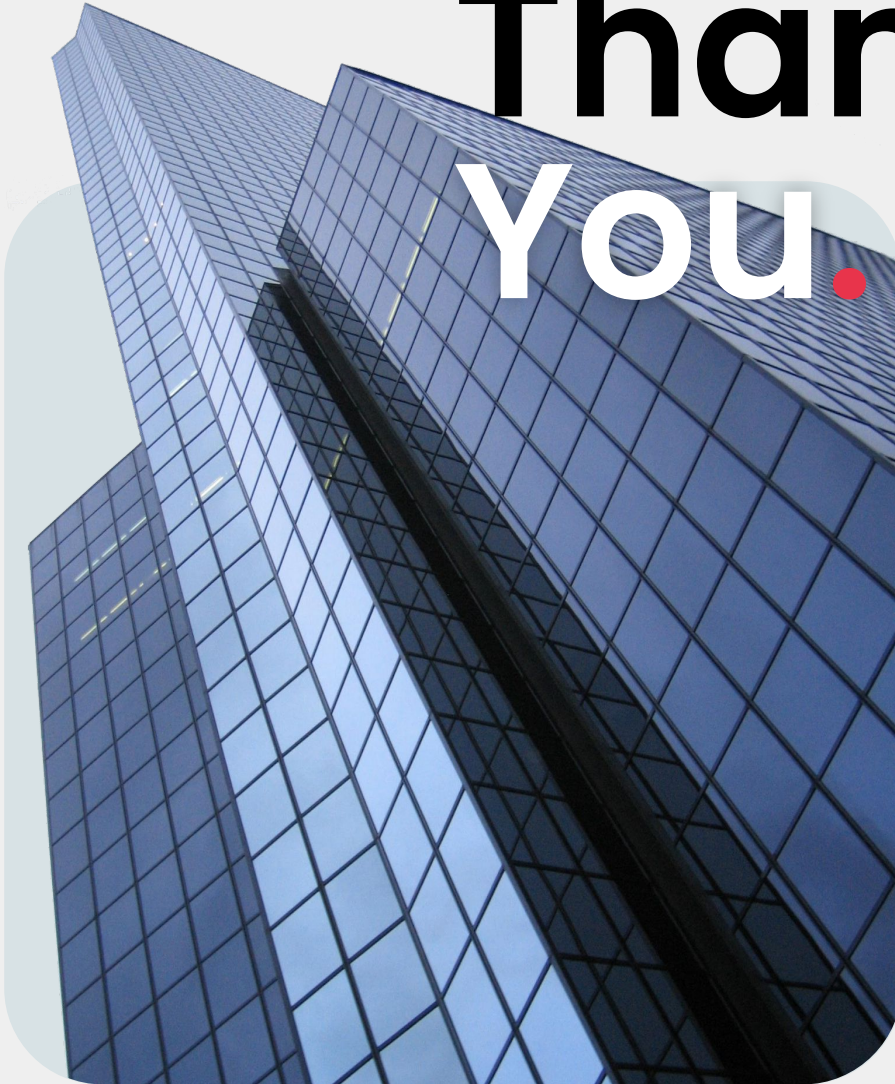
So it **created a bespoke brand widget** that connects to the Xbox controller and displays the live battery read on-screen, showcasing Duracell Optimum extra life benefit in a way everyone could understand. A solution to a very real problem. But it still needed to draw attention to the widget. So it then partnered with some of the biggest streamers for a six-week long battery challenge, highlighting the widget during the streamers’ gameplay. The effort resulted in over 170 million impressions, a 78% lift in brand recall, a 26% lift in brand favorability, and a 12% lift in purchase intent.



A closing thought.

We are in an era where relevance sits at the heart of every brand's growth agenda. But to drive relevance requires different ways of working and a transformed combination of creative solutions. Approaching media and creative with an "everything everywhere" mentality will ensure maximum marketing effectiveness, drive brand relevance, and accelerate growth.

Thank You.



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