DAVID OGILVY AWARDS
Presented by the Advertising Research Foundation

TITLE OF CASE STUDY: MetLife: Growing the Acquisition Engine

1. Business Situation

In a newly formed partnership, MetLife and Neo@Ogilvy agreed upon extremely aggressive acquisition growth goals for 2009 and 2010:

- Increase "shopper" visitor traffic by 25%, while decreasing Cost Per Visit by 20%
- Generate 50% YOY increase in leads in 2009, and 140% YOY increase in leads in 2010
- Improve lead and customer quality
- Establish metlife.com as a viable sales channel
- Drive brand preference

Goals come hand in hand with challenges:

- Recent financial crises eroded trust and credibility within the category
- Low share of voice within the category (5%)
- Highly competitive category in DR channels
- Neo@Ogilvy as new Digital Agency of Record

But with challenging goals often come industry-leading solutions. We developed an innovative program that enabled a seamless evolution from the existing marketing and advertising framework. Our strategic approach leveraged learning and historical performance, identifying the right tests in a structured analytic capacity while staying fluid to learn quickly and optimize across channels and tactics. An integrated, accountable agency team coined as "Team Snoopy" that included strategic, creative, media analytics and project management resources was introduced to plan, execute, and optimize flawlessly.

Rigorous measurement and a test-and-learn methodology enabled us to optimize every step of the purchase funnel in real-time. We built analytics and accountability into our DNA, bringing a channel agnostic sensibility driven by our ability to measure and optimize results into all creative and media formats. By putting analytics resources at the very core of our team, we helped ensure that all decisions revolved around one fundamental objective: delivering measurable results against our business goals.

2. Research Contribution

Our founder once said, in what we hope was a rousing impromptu speech to his researchers while deep in thought, "We pursue knowledge the way a pig pursues truffles." This has always been our guiding research mantra and it soon became clear to us that our partners at MetLife were seeking help in finding the most exquisite of truffles within the digital media research world: *Attribution*.

The problem was simple: MetLife had historically been unsatisfied with prior work that looked to prove the incremental value of view-through conversions and had thus only counted 'last touch' click conversions in their results reporting. Our experience and consistent industry findings convinced us that this approach left a substantial number of online leads unattributed. As such, we embarked on a four-stage onboarding attribution solution that continues to this day.

Stage-1: Proving the Incremental Value of a View-through

In order to prove the value of a view-through, we fielded a controlled cookie-level experiment that ran a PSA control ad and measured the expected decay in lead conversions between our regular ads and these control ads. Our test hypothesis was that there would be some incremental impact from the view conversion, but not past 30 days (the standard 'default' in nearly all ad-servers). The analysis showed a statistically significant (<.05 p-value) incremental impact of post-view lead yield rates out 1 day, and while small in duration, this allowed us to count view-though leads as part of our overall Cost-per-Lead metric.

The pay-off was big, as the click-only CPL's from both DoubleClick and WebTrends (our digital reporting systems) were more than 60% better when factoring in these view-though leads. This game-changer allowed us to better reflect the correct incremental impact of a Display creative ad and expand our media planning into newer tactics that would drive results through views.

But we dug deeper. We know when we smell a truffle. By having induced a control group in our cookie data, we had the ability to look at users with unique cookies across both search and display and prove that (as expected) that search yield rates increase when they are exposed to display exposures (they saw a display ad, did not click, but converted via search). This finding allowed us to prove that smart digital campaigns require both channels.

Stage-2: Determining the Assist Factor of Multiple Exposures

The next stage of our attribution solution was, in knowing the correct view-through window, to determine which display placements had the best assisting contribution from display exposure to lead conversion across multiple sites and multiple placements (including search engines).

Our framework was to take at the placement level not only the assist percent (e.g. the reporting shows 100 leads for a given placement but we identify that 30% were from multiple frequency exposures across multiple sites or placements), but also a calculated recency score to prioritize the likely stronger impact of a more recent exposure. When combined with the placement reach and spend we were able to create two new measures to rank and identify the most likely placements deemed the most assistive for planners to further investigate and experiment.

We ranked every placement against a Contribution Index (a calculated index that compares a placement's assist weight and score against the expected probability of all placements combined) and an Assist Factor (the expected improvement in the Cost per Lead dollar value when factoring in the placement's assist). With this framework in place, planners and analysts can collaborate and drill-down into every placement and every tactic on a regular basis to identify new growth opportunities for experimentation and we continue to refine this framework.

Stage-3: Proving that our Display Creative also Drives Positive Brand Attributes

In addition to the preceding behavioral media research, we also wanted to prove that we could deliver hard-hitting DR creative but still drive positive brand attributes given the rich heritage of MetLife's brand equity. To this extent we partnered with Insight Express to power a Display brand survey and found that, as expected, DR creative drove the best lifts when we delivered multiple exposures (statistically significant lifts occurring at 7+ exposures), but more importantly, when de-composing the results by creative against our behavioral results, we were able to see that the new Ogilvy creatives were able to deliver not only the best Cost per Leads and Conversion Rates, but also the best positive lifts for Brand Preference and Purchase Consideration. In contrast, the old creative showed a negative lift for Online Ad Awareness and the lowest Cost per Leads and Conversion Rates.

Stage-4: Quantifying the Total Marketing Effectiveness of Digital and Offline Media

Finally, having shown that we could attribute and quantify the behavioral as well as brand impact of Digital, MetLife challenged us to go further and think about how to measure the total impact of all paid media (TV, Blimp, Magazine, Display, Search) against not only leads but also qualified Completed Applications. This challenge presented the perfect opportunity for us to work with MarketSharePartners (MSP), with whom we have embarked on a strategic partnership to deliver a more holistic and actionable approach to econometric mix modeling.

For example, a key insight that MSP helped us derive was that this problem should be solved using a two-stage model where Leads would be solved for first and then used as an input towards a total effectiveness model that would solve for completed applications. Additionally, MSP was able to prove that one of the keys to delivering a better predictive fit was to incorporate organic search query volume as an indirect variable (e.g. it makes more sense to solve for TV > organic search > website visits > leads, than to solve for TV > leads). For example, we see that this multi-stage model is able to solve for each of the offline channels' relative elasticity (e.g. if I spend x% more, I can get y% more), as a product of how they are able to influence online traffic

Furthermore, we were able to work collaborative with MSP to go further than traditional mix model analysis and enhance the data analysis to also look at some of the channel sub-categories, in this case showing some of our key Display tactics. This was especially important; having done a substantial amount of work in proving this channel's attribution impact, we were curious to know if some of our key tactics were suffering any diminishing returns or had incorrect mixes. Interestingly, we discovered that when we compared the historical mixes against one of our more recent plans, the optimal model recommendations were relatively in line with our recent plan. For example, the model picked up that targeted / behavioral tactics were the most elastic and we had indeed invested accordingly. At the same time, the model also suggested that we should have been investing higher amounts in Retargeting / Remessaging tactics, but this is where real world limitations came in – there simply was no more inventory for us to buy. We had bought all remaining quality inventory and had thus left some of our remaining allocations under the CPA (pay per lead) tactics. Since then, we have worked with our publishers and Demand Side Platform partners to augment and discover more stable avenues of retargeting inventory.

3. Campaign Description

A unified approach to creative

Rather than join the (hollow) “trust us” messaging bandwagon, MetLife’s communications approach used all of its marketing tools and direct response-focused messaging to drive a ‘ready to act’ and ‘eager to quote’ audience to an all-new metlife.com and appropriate single-minded campaign landing pages.

Robust measurement programs

Performance data (media, online, offline, site, leads) was reported in real time. We performed sales funnel diagnostics and continually optimized media and messages to feed the funnel with more qualified leads while continuing to build the brand.

Display and digital media advertising – Do More with Less

We used data-driven marketing and retargeting to reach a qualified target at the most efficient cost, regardless of where they are online, honing in on specific CPA programs to a drive consistent stream of cost-controlled prospects. Advertising spend went into top, high impact tactics that deliver high volume of low-cost prospects to landing destinations. Throughout, we tested new tactics aggressively.

Search Engine Marketing – Drive Campaign Volume and Efficiency

To generate and maintain lead volume we optimized the presence of paid search and expanded the campaign significantly from previous year. We set an allowable cost per lead, and optimized aggressively across the campaign to maintain overall campaign efficiency. The campaign was structured by product group, while predefined benchmarks within each allowed for rapid optimizations, campaign flexibility, and the ability to lean into success.

In addition, the MetLife and Neo@Ogilvy teams changed the marketing plan from seasonal to year-round, giving us more efficiency and the ability to make rolling changes in all marketing efforts. We rolled out an award-winning redesign of metlife.com to provide better navigation and a more user-friendly experience, and designed ‘no pressure’ online tools and creative that helped demystify specific products, offers, pricing, and motivated consumers to take action immediately. This combination helped us over-deliver on all of our marketing goals, in an extremely challenging economic and consumer environment.

4. Business Results

Results convincingly exceeded expectations in FY2009:

- Total Lead Volume up 184% YOY
- Paid Search Leads up 303% YOY
- Conversion Rate up 158% YOY
- Eclipsed 2008 Lead totals in mid June
- Increased web visits by 40%, exceeding the set goal of 15%

- Decreased cost-per-lead by 66% over the course of the year.
- Grew consumer trust by 7% in 2009, exceeding their brand goals of sustaining the current level of trust with consumers. MetLife was one of few brands that emerged from the financial crisis in a stronger position.
- Brand preference grew 11% (vs. the set goal of maintaining current levels), while unaided first mention of MetLife grew by 16%, beating the set goal (10%) by 6%. Additionally, consumers who saw MetLife's advertising were 3x more likely to prefer the brand

As 2010 goals became even more aggressive, results continued to exceed expectations:

- Total leads: +38% YOY
- Phone response: 3x YOY
- Conversion rates: 3x YOY
- Cost per acquisition: -20% YOY
- Average policy premium: +10% over goal (testament to high-quality leads)
- Reclaimed #1 position in brand preference: +47%
- Highest levels ever of brand awareness, consideration and product preference

While traffic and leads are important, in 2010, the primary success metric was sales: this more holistic, better-calculated attribution process established metlife.com as the company's second-best sales channel overall (behind its long-established, thousands-strong channel of career agents) within a short one-year span.