REPORT

EVERYTHING WRONG WITH TV MEASUREMENT

The Attribution Playbook for TV Advertisers

marketing architects

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Executive Summary

Purpose

To identify top challenges facing advertisers when measuring TV's effectiveness and to provide a playbook for solving them.

The Problem

While digital channels offer granular tracking and analytics, TV advertising is perceived as unmeasurable—with 63% of current TV advertisers expressing doubts about their ability to measure TV's impact accurately.

This perception stems from outdated measurement techniques, reliance on inadequate data, and the complexity of connecting TV to direct business outcomes. Unfortunately, this leads to reduced confidence and investment in one of the most powerful marketing channels there is.

The Solution

TV advertisers can more accurately evaluate their campaign's impact by:

1. Setting attribution up for success with **deliberate planning** before launch.
2. Using **multiple measurement models** to verify results and establish outcomes across the short- and long-term.
3. Taking a position of **skepticism** when evaluating results.

Evidence

- TV still generates the largest sales impact of any video marketing channel, which marketers cite as the most important sign of a successful campaign. But half of TV advertisers say difficulty measuring TV has led them to invest more in other channels.
- Only 37% of TV advertisers say they're very confident in their TV measurement.
- 45% of TV advertisers say either linear or CTV is the hardest channel to measure in their media mix.
- Over a quarter of TV advertisers say measuring linear TV has been harder than they expected. 23% say the same of Connected TV.

EVERYTHING WRONG WITH TV MEASUREMENT

INTRODUCTION

TV MEASUREMENT

Introduction

Today, marketing measurement is challenging regardless of the channel. But TV advertising has gained a reputation as being pretty much unmeasurable.

Only 37% of TV advertisers say they're very confident in their TV measurement. And half say that difficulty measuring TV has led them to invest more in other channels.

Why is this? TV advertising's been around since the 1940s. It's one of the most iconic and visible forms of marketing. You'd think we'd have learned to measure its impact on the brands investing precious marketing dollars into it. After all, it's still the largest offline channel in terms of ad spend.

Rewind a few decades, and TV was considered measurable.

"Half the money I spend on advertising is wasted; the trouble is, **I don't know which half**."

—John Wanamaker

Nielsen dominated the TV industry by placing monitoring boxes in a demographically representative sample of households across the country to track viewing habits. Participants recorded what programs they watched in paper diaries. This allowed Nielsen to extrapolate ratings for shows and advertising spots while granting advertisers insight into the reach and frequency of their campaigns. Nielsen only recently retired these paper diaries in 2017.

On the qualitative side, focus groups recruited from Nielsen families or other sources of an advertiser's target demographic provided direct viewer feedback. Moderators gauged reactions to commercials through open discussions that could help determine whether creative executions resonated or fell flat.

Randomly sampled telephone surveys judged TV viewers' unaided and aided ad recall to determine campaigns' memorability. For retail products, marketers analyzed in-store traffic and sales data between test and control regions. Lift generated in markets where ads ran suggested something about those ads was working. Redemption rates of coupons featured in commercials indicated direct response levels.

Clearly, none of this formed a perfect system. Self-reporting is inherently limited in what it can tell you, and Nielsen's paper diaries existed through years of criticism. Focus groups are expensive, time-consuming, and must be conducted and interpreted carefully to gain real insights. Plus, it's all a far cry from the big data and advanced analytics that are table stakes for marketing attribution now.

With the birth of digital channels, marketers could suddenly track user behavior and conversions at an unprecedented level of granularity. Impressions, clicks, and conversions were all definitively quantifiable. We could track a buyer's journey online from ad exposure to final sale, raising expectations for accurate and data-driven measurement and making traditional TV measurement practices outdated and imprecise by comparison.

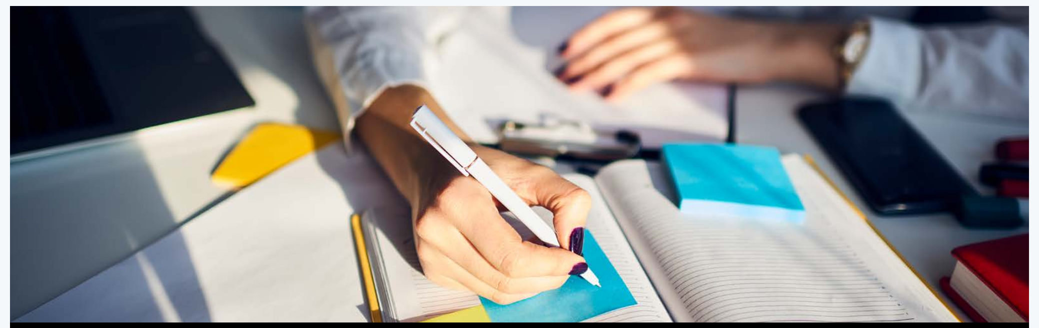
Still, how did we get to "TV can't be measured"? And can we find our way back to feeling confident in our ability to prove the results TV drives?

As a TV agency, we work with marketers every day who are **simultaneously confident in TV's impact and working to understand it on a deeper level**. But we know this isn't the norm, so we've taken our knowledge from years of partnering with intensely smart marketers and highly critical analysts, conducted original research to see how that knowledge matches up with general practices around TV attribution, and compiled everything we've learned in this report.

My hope is that it provides a comprehensive playbook for advertisers on how to set TV up for measurability. And, of course, profitability.

—Angela Voss, CEO at Marketing Architects

How has TV measurement changed?



Paper Diaries

Focus Groups

Phone Surveys

Test Groups

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METHODOLOGY

Methodology

1. To learn more about beliefs about TV advertising's measurability, we conducted **a survey** across more than 300 marketers.

   These marketers work for companies with $50 million or more in annual revenue, range across B2B, B2C, and hybrid business models, and fill entry-level to C-suite positions. Industries include retail, personal services, software, real estate, consumer packaged goods, fashion, transportation, and more. A third (32%) of respondents said they were the final decision-maker for how media dollars are spent at their company and close to a quarter (23%) are current TV advertisers.

   Throughout this report, you'll see survey results from the full 300+ group (labeled marketers) and other findings based on questions only asked of those actively advertising on TV (labeled TV advertisers).

2. To support our primary research and better understand TV's measurement problem, we conducted **extensive secondary research** with sources like eMarketer, WARC, Statista, and Nielsen. References citing this research can be found at the end of this report.

3. And finally, to uncover solutions and provide a guide for successful and reliable TV attribution, we reviewed our own experiences with **client campaigns** going back more than 20 years.

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TV'S IMPACT ACROSS THE FUNNEL

TV MEASUREMENT

TV's impact across the funnel

"**TV is an incredible brand-builder** and a powerful direct response channel."

40 years ago, TV commercials typically fell into one of two camps... Beautifully produced, highly emotional brand-building spots. Or 1-800-number-filled infomercials urging you to purchase a limited time, one-of-a-kind product.

While both types of commercials still exist, most modern TV campaigns live somewhere in the middle. That's because TV is an incredible brand-builder and a powerful direct response channel.

TV still stands relatively unchallenged as the ideal channel for brands pursuing fame. If you think of the biggest U.S. brands—Walmart, Apple, The Home Depot, Amazon—a trend emerges. All are huge TV advertisers. For Amazon, that's even despite founder Jeff Bezos's comment that "Advertising is the price you pay for having an unremarkable product or service."

According to WARC, TV also generates the greatest sales impact of any form of video advertising. Ads viewed on a TV set drive 44% more sales than when an ad is not seen at all—compared to 37% for YouTube and 21% for Facebook ads. TV ads viewed on mobile drive even more sales, a whopping 61% more than no ad at all.

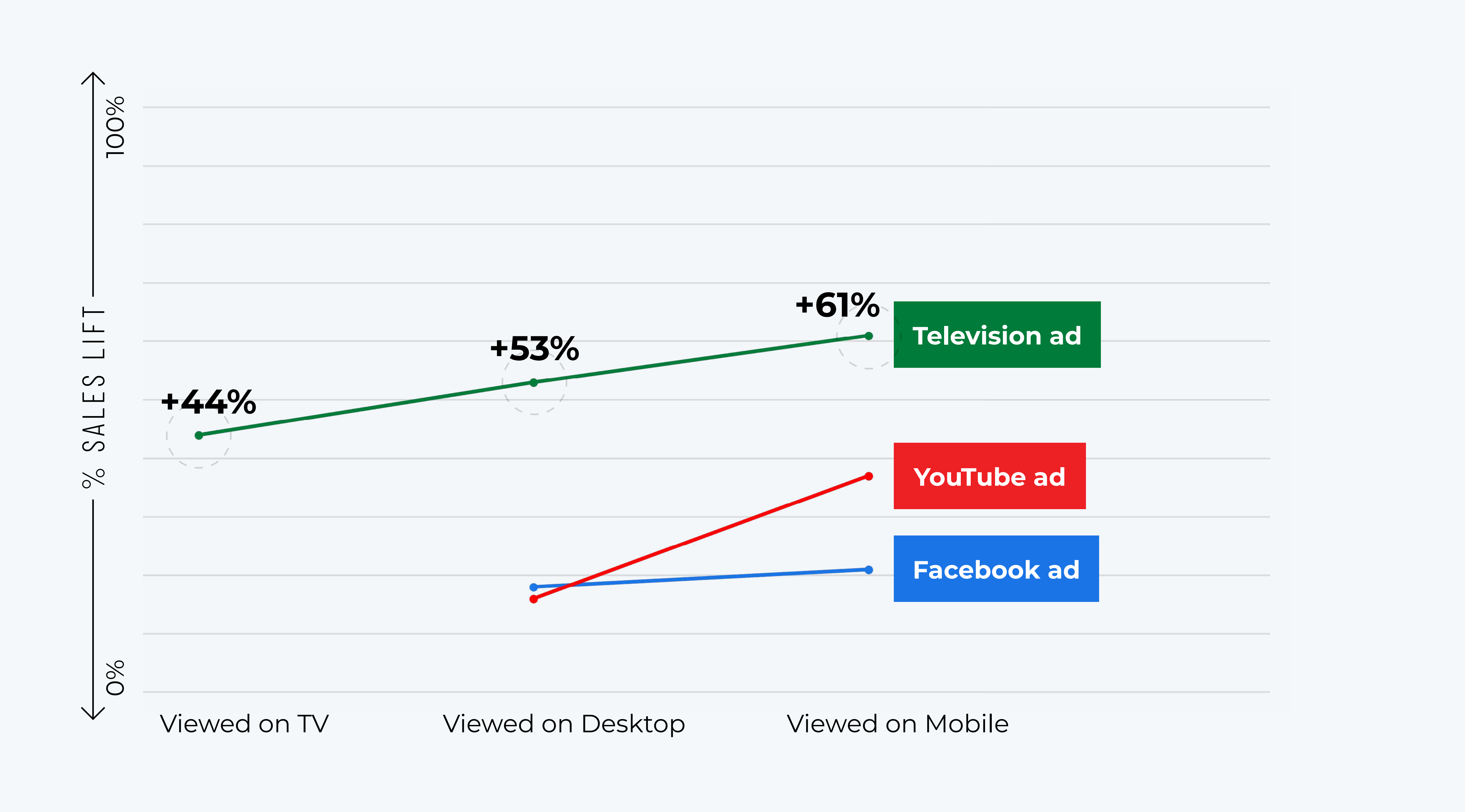
VAB has also proven TV's potential to drive short-term business results. Their research shows 77% of app-driven brands see a direct correlation between their TV campaigns and traffic to their mobile app while ecommerce brands can experience double and even triple-digit percentage revenue increases in the first year after launching TV. This is definitely good news, since according to the marketers we surveyed, sales lift is the most important metric for determining campaign success.

These full-funnel effects are exciting for marketers looking to drive transformative results. But they're a nightmare for those trying to quantify each area of impact. Because there's suddenly a whole lot to track—and a wide variety of strategies and attribution models required to account for everything TV does. It's why 45% of TV advertisers say either linear or CTV is the hardest channel to measure in their marketing mix.

To make it all more manageable, let's break TV's effects into three main categories.

TV generates greatest sales impact

Measured across media platforms



Micro Impacts

The immediate response your TV ad receives.

Data on TV's short-term results should get as granular as evaluating the response within minutes after each airing. Review in-market creative performance by tracking response through calls, text, or web lift immediately following the campaign launch. Such definitive numbers provide an early gauge for how people view and receive your ad. However, they're only one view into performance.

Macro Impacts

The broader effects of TV, including shifts in web traffic composition, conversion rates, and brand effects.

How do you account for someone who sees your ad today but won't place an order for a couple weeks? They're still influenced by your TV campaign but won't show up in your micro analysis following the campaign launch.

Depending on your budget and measurement strategy, advertisers start to see broader effects within a few weeks to a couple of months after launching. Total number of new customers may increase, driven to your brand by TV's broad reach. Web traffic composition most likely will shift as TV drives consumers to search for your brand. These are signs of TV's power at work. Adding a survey to your website asking visitors how they learned about your brand could also provide another data point on TV's effect within your customer base.

Business Impacts

How did your campaign affect your bottom line?

But even the secondary impacts of TV are relatively short-term when considering everything TV can accomplish. At a certain point, the impact of TV begins to move beyond performance and into lasting brand and business effects.

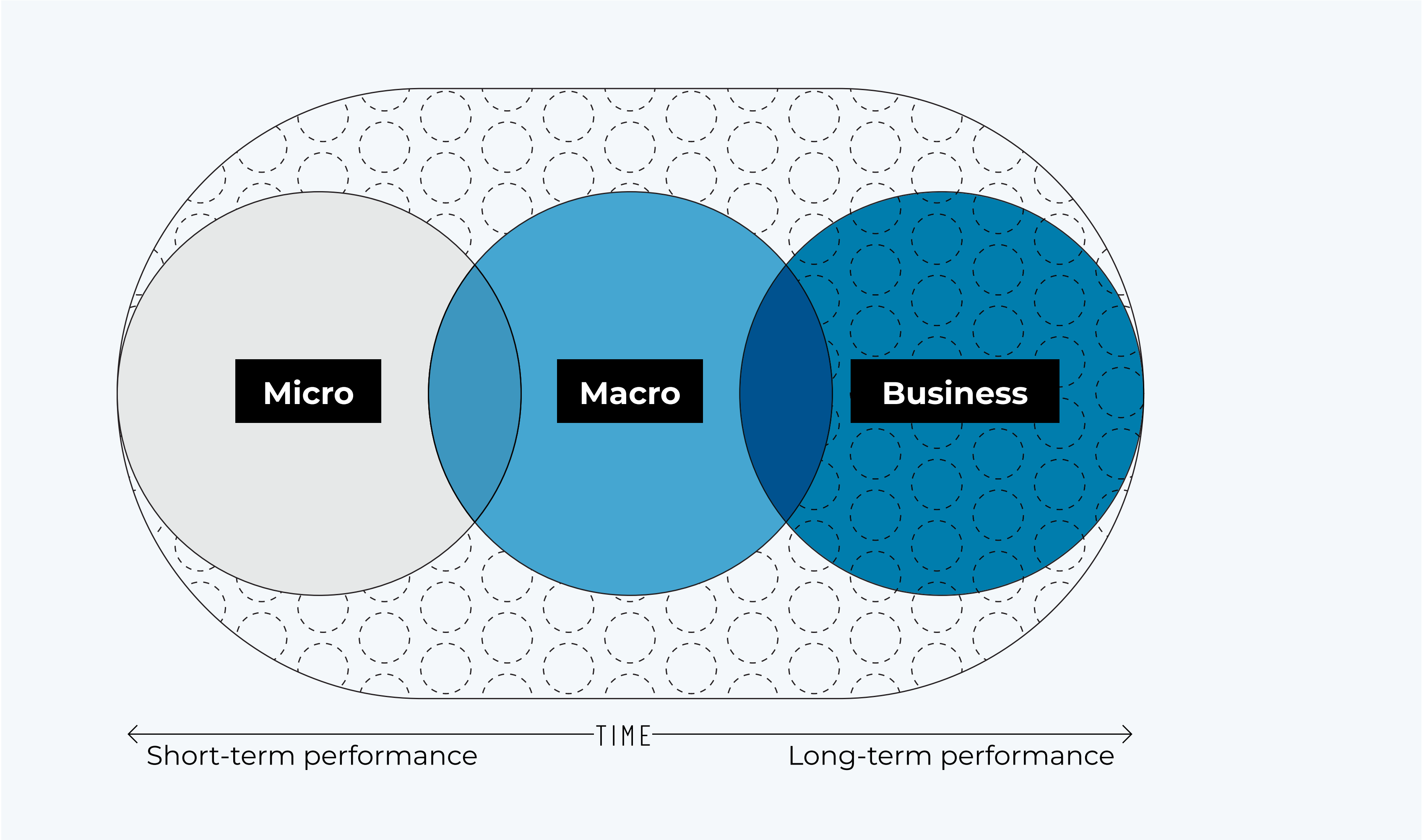
Conduct surveys to look for changes in recall or brand perception. Increased pricing power or greater opportunities for partnerships also tend to point towards TV's big-picture impacts. And, of course, revenue growth is the greatest indicator of success. On average, our clients have seen revenue grow 39% during their first year on TV.

Finally, there are the truly transformative outcomes. Clients have experienced results ranging from TV making them number one in their category to burgeoning stock prices. One gained a partnership offer from Disney after airing their commercial. They also benefited from improved pricing power while advertising on TV. The top consideration for choosing a solution in their category was price. But despite their perceived affordability falling, new customers were flooding in.

Plus, the excitement around TV has a pronounced internal impact. Everyone from board members to employees to stakeholders feel excitement when their brand launches TV. There's something about seeing your business on a TV screen that is completely unlike seeing a display ad for your brand online.

Getting the full picture of TV performance

Micro, macro and business impacts



This full-picture understanding of TV's impacts—beyond 'brand' or 'sales'—helps clarify how to think about the role it plays in your marketing mix. But how do you actually start tracking each type of effect?

We reviewed our own clients' campaigns to determine the principles that have most repeatedly driven clear, accurate attribution over the years. Our top recommendations for bringing those principles into your own measurement practices are shared next.

EVERYTHING WRONG WITH TV MEASUREMENT

PRINCIPLES FOR ACCURATE TV ATTRIBUTION

PRINCIPLE #1

Clear results start with clear planning

What's the worst-case scenario after launching a TV test?

If you answered with "a failed campaign," you're wrong. The true nightmare for any marketer testing TV is wrapping up the campaign and simply... not knowing. Not knowing if it flourished or floundered. If your brand felt its impact or if it was business as usual.

Because not only did you spend thousands (even millions) on a potentially failed TV campaign, you have no learnings to show for it. There are no takeaways to make sure that this scenario never happens again. Running another campaign will mean starting from scratch.

Unfortunately, this scenario is more common than you might think. Initial reporting might show positive signs but the effects are never felt down-funnel, leaving marketers scratching their heads on where things went wrong. Or, a brand works with a black-box agency, and they simply never get access to results outside of what their agency tells them. The most common culprit, however, is a lack of clarity around what success really means.

"One of the most painful scenarios a TV advertiser can face is coming out of their campaign and **not knowing how it performed**. Unfortunately, we see this far too often with new clients who've tested TV in the past."

—Matt Hultgren, VP Analytics at Marketing Architects

A TV campaign's measurability is often established long before it hits the air. When planning your campaign, take the time to align on everything from your biggest goals to how seasonality during the campaign window could affect results.

Define a Single Win-or-Lose Metric

There's a lot TV can accomplish. But what do you actually want it to do? What's the absolute, most-important, end-of-the-day result you're hoping to see from your campaign? What single metric would allow you to confidently tell your CEO the campaign was a success?

For performance-driven campaigns, this might be some version of return on investment (ROI) or return on ad spend (ROAS). Regardless, it needs to be clearly defined and your north star through all stages of campaign planning.

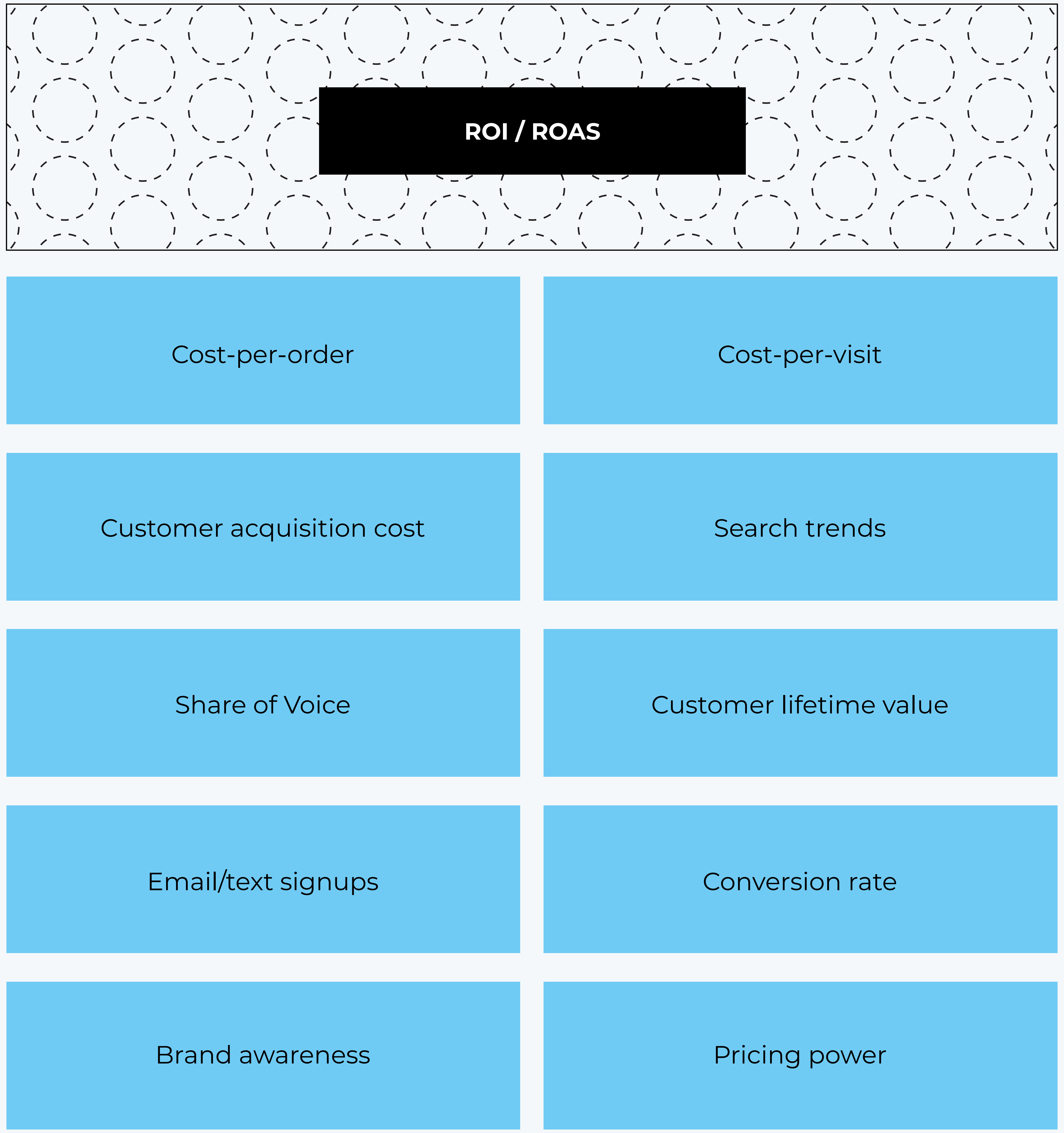
Identify Supporting Objectives

Of course, you don't only care about ROI. While your primary metric reigns supreme, five to seven secondary key performance objectives (KPIs) can help track TV's broader impact on your business. These might include:

- Cost-per-order
- Cost-per-visit
- Customer acquisition cost
- Search trends
- Share of Voice
- Customer Lifetime Value
- Email/text signups
- Conversion rate
- Brand awareness
- Pricing power

However, there are endless options for KPIs, and choosing the right ones depends entirely on your business and what you're trying to achieve on TV. Whatever you choose, tracking those KPIs across both TV and your overall marketing mix is recommended due to the impact TV has on other channels.

Primary and secondary KPIs



Develop Test-and-Learn Questions

Naturally, you're going to have some questions about TV's impact that can't be answered with a single metric but instead require a high-level analysis of several metrics or specific testing during your campaign. These should also be determined early in your planning process. The most common questions from our clients' TV tests are listed below.

Question	Why it matters
How does linear vs streaming TV perform?	This can inform how you divide your TV budget between the two forms of TV in the future to prioritize the channel that's most impactful.
Does creative spot length impact performance?	We often see performance differences between :15s and :30s. Some clients even find success with :60s, depending on their brand and audience.
How do different audience demographics respond to the ad?	This information could affect targeting or even change your creative approach.
Does TV impact other channels in my marketing mix?	This aspect of TV often goes ignored but is crucial in measuring TV's full impact and helping you know what to expect across channels when launching a new campaign.
Does the customer driven by TV differ from customers driven by other channels?	Customers driven by TV often boast a higher lifetime value (LTV) than others. Accounting for this difference can help you understand TV's full impact.

Budget For Measurability

Your TV test must have enough media spend to noticeably make a difference for your business. Larger businesses with lots of activity may need to spend more than a smaller business to evaluate the effectiveness of their TV ads. This is another way brands end up with campaigns with no clear results. If spend is too low, the best a brand can hope for is being able to track micro impacts. The macro and business effects (the most exciting ones) will remain unclear.

But sometimes budgets are limited and spend amounts are outside of the marketer's control. In this case, spend what you do have strategically on a smaller scale. One way to do this is to use test and control markets. This means you'll have dedicated markets where you don't run TV ads. Then you'll compare the performance of markets with TV advertising to those without. Ideally, positive signals here should help make the case for a larger budget and help scale your TV initiative. More detail on how to use test markets effectively is shared in a later section of this report.

Isolate TV's Impact

Finally, avoid launching your first TV campaign the same week you also make a major change to your website. Or at the same time you dramatically increase spend in other channels due to a new product launch. Sure, this isn't always possible, but when it is, fewer variables will make it easier to determine exactly what's caused by TV alone.
Also consider the seasonality of your business when looking at the timing of your campaign launch. If you see increased orders during a holiday season, you may need to spend more compared to during the off-season to know results were driven by TV, not just the time of year.

So now that you know what to track and have context for the budget and timing needed to make those metrics trackable, the next step is setting up attribution models to actually track them.

PRINCIPLE #2

"All models are wrong, but some are useful."

"There is **no silver bullet** for accurate TV measurement."

It's time for us to be upfront with some bad news...

There is no silver bullet for accurate TV measurement. No single metric that's the ultimate source of truth. And there's no attribution model that addresses everything you need to know about TV's impact on your business.

So yes, as the quote from statistician George Box states, all models are wrong. When used alone.

Accurate and comprehensive TV measurement requires multiple models, used in tandem, to interpret results. Multiple perspectives so that one can fill in what the other misses. It's like putting together a puzzle. Every attribution model provides an additional piece of the big picture that is TV performance.

Here are some of the attribution models we've found to be most useful, how they can help you better understand your campaign, and where they face limitations and need to be supported by another model.

Micro Attribution

Track immediate responses like web traffic spikes post-airing.

This should be any TV advertiser's attribution starting point: short-term performance. It's the micro impacts we discussed earlier.

To improve measurability, include a clear call-to-action in your ads. By requesting a specific action, such as visiting a website or texting a code, you encourage consumers to respond in a way that can be tracked through commonly used tools like Google Analytics. It's important to note, though, that the type of CTA can impact both response levels and the ease of tracking.

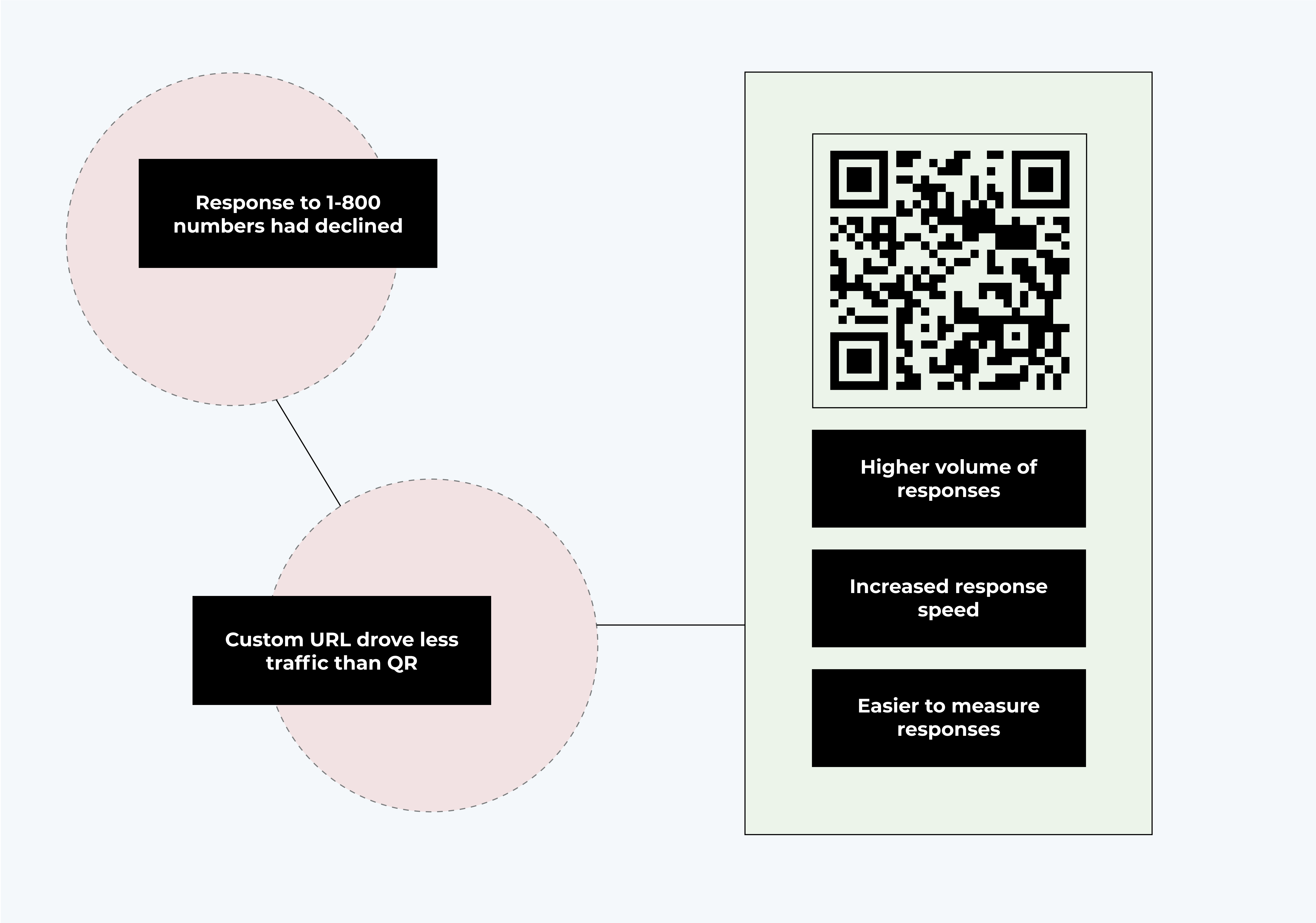
One response method that's gaining popularity is the QR code. [3 out of 4 US consumers] say they plan to use QR codes in the future, and advertisers have jumped at the news, adding the codes to everything from billboards to magazines. For TV, QR codes can provide brands a direct line to viewers while letting them track response based on number of scans, duration of engagement, and subsequent consumer actions, such as filling out a lead form or making a purchase.

One client, a financial services provider, had used toll-free numbers (TFN) as the call-to-action on their TV commercials for years. But phone response had declined as a preferred response method among consumers. We tested adding a QR code into their creative instead, sending users to a custom landing page.

Responses came in at higher volumes, more quickly, and were easier to measure than with ads featuring only the 1-800 number. A small portion of viewers still chose to call the 1-800 number, but adding the code both increased response and streamlined measurement. A future test against a custom URL still found the QR spot coming out ahead and driving greater traffic to the landing page.

QR code effectiveness in TV advertising

Anonymous client example



"The most powerful measurement encompasses first- and third-party data sources to provide advertisers with real-time, 360-degree views of audience behavior and campaign reach, frequency, and performance. **ACR data plays a major role in that mix. It clarifies viewership across devices, publishers, genres, content, and networks**. When you combine that with insights from other data sources—in-app, online, offline, QR code scans, call center data—you get a powerful recipe for campaign optimization."

—Ryan LaDuc, Senior Director, Product Marketing - Measurement at Innovid

Automatic Content Recognition (ACR)

ACR technology in smart TVs tracks content watched and IP-based response, enabling advanced reach and frequency tracking.

Smart TV users must opt in to allow ACR tracking, so this data doesn't account for everyone, but those who opt in are a large enough group to provide strong indicators—Vizio alone had more than 18 million ACR-enabled TVs already by 2021.

After ACR recognizes the content being viewed, it can tie that to a specific household, helping you understand the audiences you're reaching, how they're responding, and make sure you gain unique reach across your linear and streaming campaigns.

Macro Lift Analysis

Incremental traffic and revenue compared to customized baselines.

Also known as incrementality testing, this is one of the most definitive ways to determine TV's impact. But it only works with time and planning upfront to establish baselines for metrics like web traffic or revenue prior to launching your campaign and adjust for factors like seasonality. Lift over those baselines post-campaign is a pretty undeniable sign of TV's influence.

Those baselines are crucial, however. One of the biggest challenges in the industry is measurement platforms taking credit for every single new lead, order, or web visit connected to a campaign. But a certain percentage of those orders or leads would've come through even if they hadn't seen your TV ad. Establishing the baseline prevents over-attribution and giving TV more credit than it's due.

On-Site Surveys

Asking site visitors how they heard about you can directly link TV exposure to website traffic.

Attribution surveys are an old-school method of measuring TV's impact, and they're far from perfect. But if you're using TV to drive viewers to take action on your website, you should definitely have one.

On-site surveys allow new customers or prospects to self-report how they heard about you—whether that was through TV, mail, Facebook, word of mouth, or something else entirely. This provides insight into the performance of marketing channels that can be difficult to track. (Yes, like TV.) Surveys are likely to become even more popular as alternative tracking methods like third-party cookies are restricted due to privacy regulations.

Plus, there are methods to make those surveys less biased, such as having the list of potential sources appear in a random order each time so you can rule out people repeatedly choosing Instagram simply because it's the first option on the list.

CASE STUDY

How 1-800-HANSONS Drove Leads and Awareness on TV

Overview

Home improvement remodeler 1-800-HANSONS specializes in providing top-quality windows, roofing, siding, and more. Originally based in Detroit, they established five new locations across the country. What they needed next was a marketing move to match their ambitious expansion, one that would both raise awareness and drive new customer acquisition. A marketing move like TV.

Objective

There was just one problem. A long-time TV advertiser, 1-800-HANSONS had seen a decline in TV response over the years. Was TV really the right channel to drive growth?

We hypothesized the shift was due to changing consumer behavior rather than a failure on TV's part. The company had always used 1-800 numbers as their call-to-action in their commercials. But today, more people prefer to visit a website than call a phone number. Basing response only on calls received wouldn't account for a campaign's full impact. To measure TV's effect on web conversions, we recommended adding a survey to the company's online lead form where users could indicate how they discovered the brand.

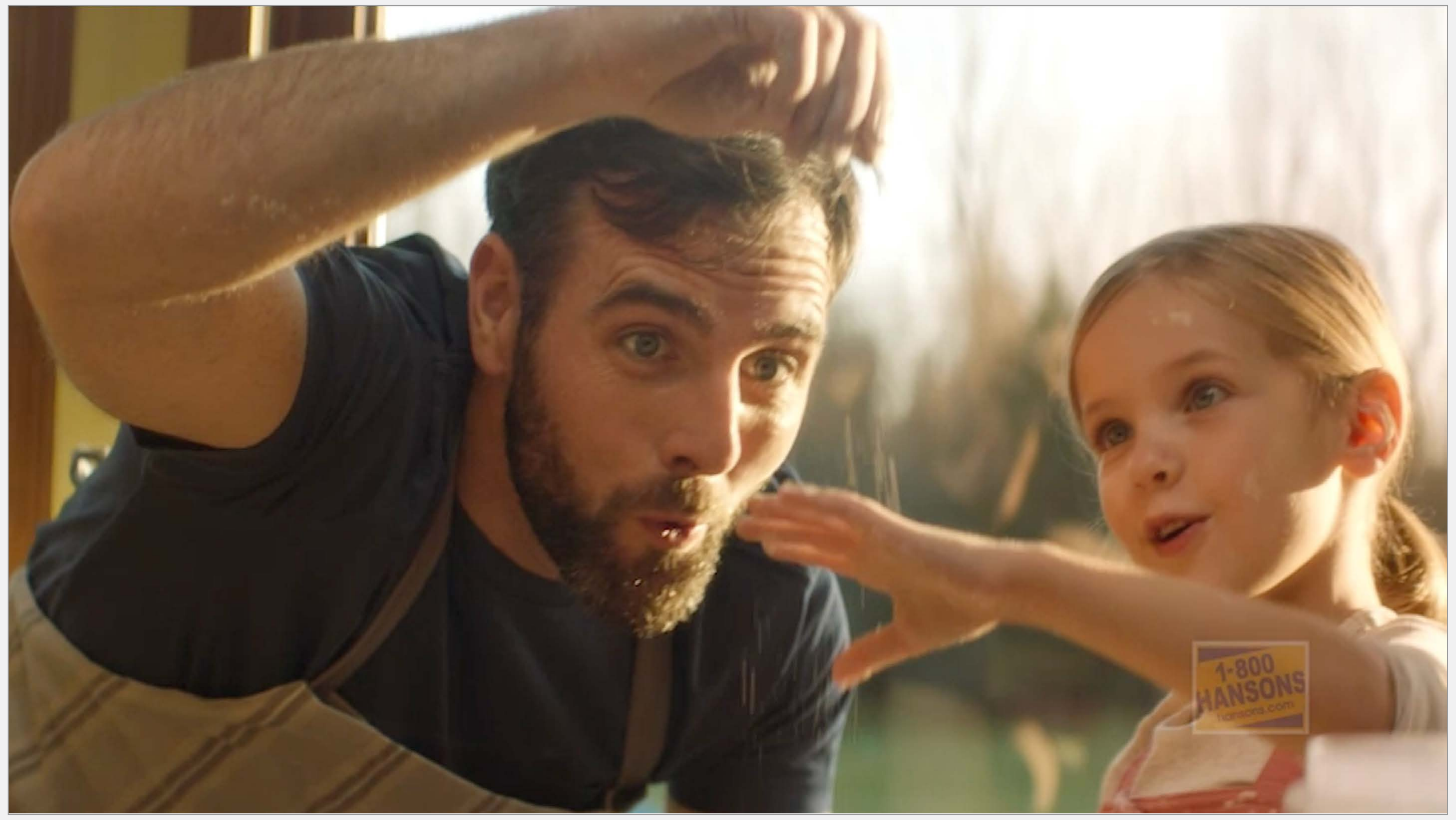
Results

For the campaign to truly achieve its goals, 1-800-HANSONS needed to drive business. Survey data from the lead form showed TV's effect was five times greater than could be measured by phone calls alone—reducing the cost of each TV-attributed lead to a fifth of its initially calculated cost. Today, nearly a quarter of survey respondents cite TV as where they learned about the company and return on ad spend has reached 6X.

Today, 1-800-HANSONS continues to grow both their brand and business through TV while serving homes across the country, with more than 200,000 satisfied customers.

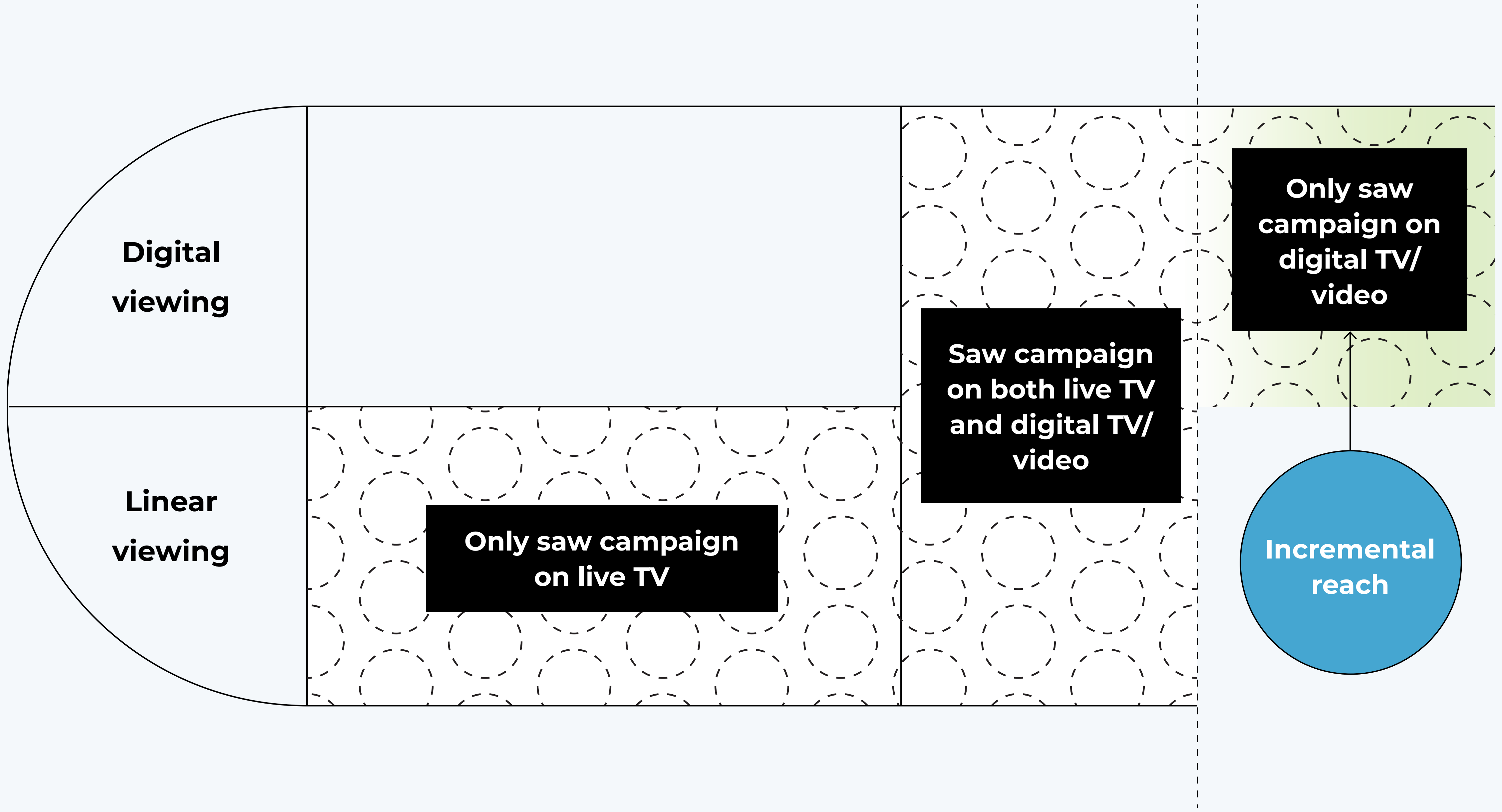
1-800-HANSONS saw:

+17% aided awareness	**6X** return on ad spend	**24%** of survey respondents select TV



Incremental reach

Linear vs. Digital viewing



Unique Reach Analysis

Evaluate unique impressions for campaigns that include both linear and streaming TV.

One of the greatest benefits streaming TV offers is the ability to reach audiences you can't with linear. In 2023, the sum of cord-cutters and cord-nevers surpassed pay TV viewers for the first time. That's a lot of people to engage through incremental reach.

Of course, many TV viewers still watch both linear and streaming TV. But for advertisers already present on linear, investment in streaming should focus on those new, unreachable audiences for two reasons. First, CPMs in streaming are typically higher than what can be achieved in linear. If someone can be engaged through linear for less, that's the obvious route to follow. Second, hitting the same audiences through both linear and streaming can make frequency more challenging to track and measure. Incremental reach can be measured through household modeling or ACR solutions.

Joybird, an online furniture retailer, was ready to test streaming in addition to their linear TV campaigns. Focused on attracting new customers, they were looking to reach cord-cutter audiences they weren't already engaging through linear while driving web traffic at a positive return on ad spend.

We started by implementing pixels to track web sessions and orders to evaluate the response and conversion rates between different targeting lines. Then, we prepared to measure the overlap between their linear and streaming audiences. By the end of the campaign, we identified audiences with the strongest front-end response and most efficient down-funnel metrics, plus proved there was a mere 4.5% overlap between linear and streaming. Almost all the client's streaming budget was going to reach entirely new audiences.

Local Heavy Up

Utilize test and control markets to isolate TV's impact.

Let's say you want to prove TV's impact on a small scale before going all-in. Or you have very specific outcomes you're looking to test for. Or your budget isn't large enough to drive measurable lift nationally.

One solution is a local heavy up test. This involves establishing control markets where you specifically plan not to run TV ads and test markets where you lean heavily into TV. Besides the TV test, keep marketing efforts as similar as possible across the markets. Then, once the campaign has run its course, compare the performance of markets with TV advertising to those without. If the test markets performed better, that's a strong sign TV's working.

Adorama used this approach to validate TV's ability to promote specific product categories. The online retailer had been known as the place for professional photography equipment for years but expanded into a wide variety of electronics. They had a hunch TV could help raise awareness of their products beyond photography—just in time for holiday shopping.

Partnering with us, the retailer launched a TV campaign locally in a test market. This meant a smaller media investment was required and they'd be able to clearly evaluate TV's impact by comparing to control markets.

By the end of the campaign, new website user growth in the test market more than doubled. Sales growth was greatest in categories beyond camera and photo, with clear improvements in the test market over control markets.

Category	Test Market	Control Markets
Computers	+100%	+13%
Gaming	+214%	+185%
Drones & Sports	+115%	-6%
Home electronics	+52%	+37%

Best of all, aided awareness grew 6% in the test market, even though it declined 3% in the control markets.

Media Mix Modeling (MMM)

This advanced statistical model quantifies how each marketing channel impacts revenue based on channel spend and other macro factors like seasonality.

MMM has been around since the 1950s, but it's only taken center stage recently. In response to growing privacy restrictions and diminishing third-party tracking capabilities, Facebook, Google, and Amazon are all investing in their own MMM tools for advertisers. These new tools, including Meta's Robyn and Google's Lightweight make MMM—a historically expensive tool reserved for only those with massive budgets—accessible to brands of all sizes for the first time ever. So it makes sense that 53% of marketers say they will focus more time on MMM this year according to a study by the IAB.

For TV advertisers, MMM can shine a light on TV's impact on revenue compared to other channels. One limitation, however, is that MMM can be biased toward short-term performance results and may not reflect long-term shifts like brand awareness, meaning the use of multiple attribution models is still crucial.

CASE STUDY

How SmartAsset Drove Leads Through TV

Overview

Online financial information destination SmartAsset helps more than 75 million people make smart financial decisions monthly. And in 2021, it was time to expand marketing beyond digital to reach more potential customers.

Objective

The marketing channel of focus? TV, of course. Partnering with Marketing Architects, SmartAsset launched a pilot campaign to test TV's potential before scaling the channel. They hoped to drive qualified leads for SmartAdvisor, a marketplace that matches individuals with vetted financial advisors.

An initial read on performance evaluated micro results like CPM, cost-per-session, and findings from an on-site "How did you hear about us?" survey. But that was just one view into TV's impact. Next, we calculated cost-per-lead using a trend model comparing forecasted vs actual results and reviewed TV's impact on the rest of SmartAsset's marketing mix. And for a high-level review, we established an econometric model and implemented media mix modeling (MMM). This helped SmartAsset analyze every marketing channels' impact on their bottom line and set them up to quantify the long-term effect of their campaigns down the road.

Results

TV lifted the performance of other channels and with a lower cost-per-lead than anticipated, TV's ROI exceeded SmartAsset's goal by 30 points. In response, the company scaled their TV investment but didn't stop testing. The team developed new creative that disrupted industry norms by taking a lighthearted approach while highlighting their expertise. As a result, cost-per-sessions improved even further.

TV was attracting leads at a cost competitive with digital channels—while presenting SmartAsset's brand to a larger audience than digital allowed.

SmartAsset saw:

2 billion+	20%	30 points
impressions	better cost-per-lead than goal	better ROI than goal

Cross-channel impacts

Brand Studies

Pre- and post-campaign brand studies can review TV's impact on aided and unaided awareness, brand perception, and how you compare to competitors.

TV drives greater awareness and visibility than any other marketing channel. And while some performance marketers have tried to argue brand is fluffy and unmeasurable, a well-crafted brand study can provide valuable knowledge. We recommend TV advertisers run a study prior to launching TV (to establish a baseline) and once a campaign is complete (to evaluate shifts from that baseline). On average, our clients have seen an 85% increase in aided brand awareness for established brands and a 100% increase for startups/new brands while on TV.

Brand studies can also uncover key consumer insights to drive even greater growth. Family-owned ecommerce company Nuts.com experienced this first-hand when a brand study found that awareness could be improved by repositioning as an online snack brand. The study was right—it skyrocketed 136%.

Of course, brand studies can be expensive, and while they're highly recommended, increases in direct traffic or share of search can also act as proxy signals of TV's brand-boosting power. After all, if more people know your brand, you should see more people actively searching it out.

Cross-Channel Effects

Analyze changes across your marketing channels after launching TV.

No channel works in isolation, and TV's cross-channel synergies are especially strong. According to WARC, TV improves the performance of generic search by 8%, online video by 20%, and paid social by 31% on average.

Channel benefiting from the effect (columns) / **Channel generating the effect** (rows)

	TV	Online Video + VOD	Social media	Online display	Out of home	Radio	Print	Generic Search	Cinema	Direct mail
TV		20%	31%	31%	22%	31%	31%	8%	54%	20%
Online Video + VOD	3%		5%	2%	5%	3%	12%	1%	7%	2%
Social media	2%	2%		2%	3%	2%	3%	1%	3%	1%
Online display	3%	4%	4%		4%	3%	9%	3%	11%	4%
Out of home	6%	8%	9%	8%		9%	11%	1%	3%	1%
Radio	4%	4%	4%	6%	4%		3%	2%	1%	1%
Print	5%	6%	7%	5%	6%	4%		4%	13%	7%
Generic search	3%	2%	4%	2%	2%	3%	7%			6%

Note: insufficient data to robustly report Cinema and Direct Mail's effect on other channels.

Our clients have experienced these benefits and more first-hand. One financial services company, for example, found TV increased leads from other channels by 12%. By accounting for these additional TV-driven leads, their campaign achieved a 400% ROI. More examples from our clients are listed below.

Company Type	Channels Positively Impacted by TV
Financial services provider	Direct mail, phone calls, web visits
Online retailer	Branded search, organic and direct web traffic
Education provider	Affiliate marketing, paid search
Online retailer	Website and app sessions, paid search, branded search
Insurance provider	Direct mail, ecommerce
Online retailer	Direct traffic

Lifetime Value

Monetize the impact of media mix strategy changes across all channels.

Customer lifetime value (LTV) is a great way to begin parsing out cross-channel impacts. LTV looks at changes in acquisition trends and cohort comparisons for reactivation and customer value metrics. This gives advertisers a view into how strategy changes impact all marketing channels, rather than needing to evaluate incremental shifts across each individual channel and tie each back to TV as the causal factor.

PRINCIPLE #3

Challenge everything.

“Attribution models are **only as rigorous and reliable as the people analyzing results demand**.”

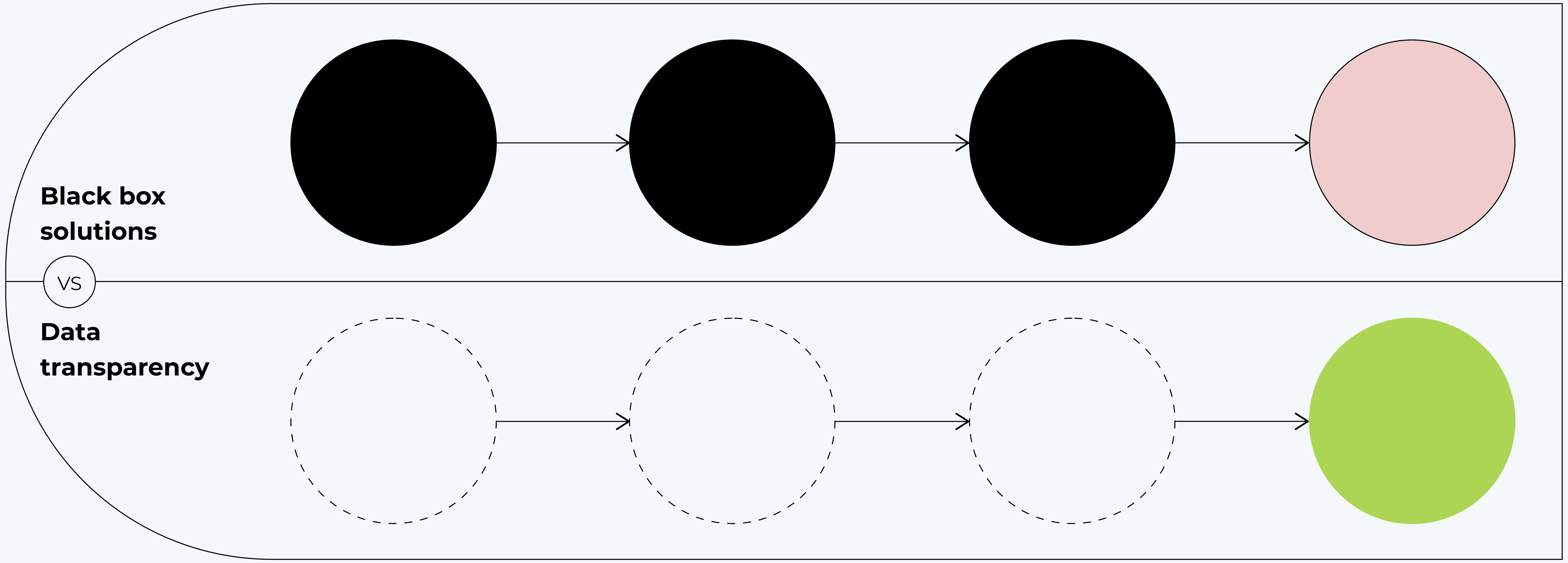
A little doubt about your TV campaigns’ results is a good thing.

It keeps you skeptical. Keeps you challenging the status quo to achieve better and more accurate answers. Because attribution models for any marketing channel are only as rigorous and reliable as the people analyzing results demand.

The good news? There are steps you can take, questions you can ask, to identify areas that need greater scrutiny. Instead of accepting results at face-value, dig into the methodologies behind them.

The key is being able to get answers to your questions.

The importance of data transparency



Avoid black box solutions.
In science and engineering, a 'black box' refers to a system or model that's highly functional and churning out information, but there's no external insight into how that system actually works.

So it's a natural term for the business models of companies that work hard to protect their proprietary information by keeping their data, processes, or tech secret from customers and competitors. Right now, the AI industry is filled with black-box solutions. More surprisingly, so is media and advertising. Especially TV advertising.

Agencies and vendors alike offer solutions where the advertiser doesn't get access to where or when their ad is being shown. And performance? Well, you have to take their word for it.

We're not saying a black box model is always concerning. It's often simply because the technical details behind how a company functions are incredibly complex. But it is harder, if not impossible, for a TV advertiser to know exactly what you're getting out of that relationship. It might be great value. Or, it might not.

While this type of solution can offer simplicity, it comes at the cost of transparency and customizability. Instead, look for a data-transparent partner that provides full access to all the data surrounding your campaign, down to each and every airing.

Don't let vendors grade their own homework.
TV advertising providers have a vested interest in selling you on the success of your campaigns. So what happens when they're the only ones judging the work they completed?

To quote Reagan, "Trust but verify."

This is also why data transparency matters. With access to all the data your agency has, you can audit their work by conducting your own analysis or bringing in a third party to validate your agency's findings. Better yet, work with a TV partner that will get you involved in their analysis from the very beginning. That way, you have confidence in each step taken and every conclusion drawn.

Push for partnership.

Be curious. Ask questions. Demand answers.

A focused inquisitiveness is the mark of a great business leader. We'd argue it's also a characteristic of great TV advertisers. Be ready to ask questions like the following when evaluating TV vendors.

Question	Why it matters
What metrics do you use to measure the success of our TV campaign?	Specifics about the KPIs they typically track or would recommend for your campaign will help you understand the scope of their analysis.
How do you attribute sales back to the TV campaign?	For performance advertisers, this is the question that matters most. Because your primary KPI is probably ROI. Inquire about the methods they use to quantify short-term results like web traffic spikes.
Can you segment performance data by variables like daypart, network, program, or geographical area?	Segmenting data helps in understanding which aspects of the campaign are working well and which need adjustment.
What is the process for testing and optimizing the campaign?	The ability to make timely, data-driven adjustments based on performance is essential for any performance campaign.
What tools and technologies do you use for data analysis and reporting?	This question will help you assess their capability to accurately track and analyze campaign performance.
How often will we receive reports, and what will they include?	Ensure the reporting frequency and format align with your needs for making timely decisions and that you have full access to information.
What learnings would you expect to gain from a TV test that could improve future campaigns?	Insights are only as good as the actions they prompt. Ask for specific recommendations on what they'd expect to learn from your pilot or test campaign and how that could inform a larger, scaled campaign in the future.

"**We tested TV with a degree of skepticism**. We're very focused, like a lot of ecommerce companies, on being very data-driven... We saw some initial success but needed help building it into something we could scale, track, and measure. And that's what led us to Marketing Architects."

—Todd Wehman, Marketing Director at Charles Schwab and former Head of Marketing at Touch of Modern

Look for a partner in TV attribution that embraces your inquisitive approach. One that welcomes pushback and questioning as an avenue to iterative improvement. This is your TV campaign and potentially millions in ad spend. It's worth these types of conversations to get it right.

Finally, TV doesn't always work.
Sometimes a TV campaign fails.

But getting results back that don't meet your goal isn't the worst-case scenario—if you're learning why those goals weren't met. In this situation, you're at least able to make changes based on what you learned and invest smarter to drive success.

Investing smarter could mean making a change to your creative messaging or media buying strategy and trying again. Or, it could mean TV isn't the right channel for your business right now.

As a TV agency, we've turned down working with companies we've felt weren't a fit for TV. Because we pay for large parts of clients' campaigns, we need to know they're a solid long-term investment. Some companies aren't a match for the channel because they sell very niche products (think professional scuba gear or luxury dog sweaters) and TV's benefits are most felt when leaning into reach. Others may benefit from TV down the road but aren't yet operationally ready to handle the level of growth TV would drive.

For all its incredible capabilities, TV isn't always the right option. And it's better to know when that's the situation you're facing than continuing to invest in something that's not working.

EVERYTHING WRONG WITH TV MEASUREMENT

WHAT'S WRONG WITH CTV MEASUREMENT

TV MEASUREMENT

What's wrong with CTV measurement?

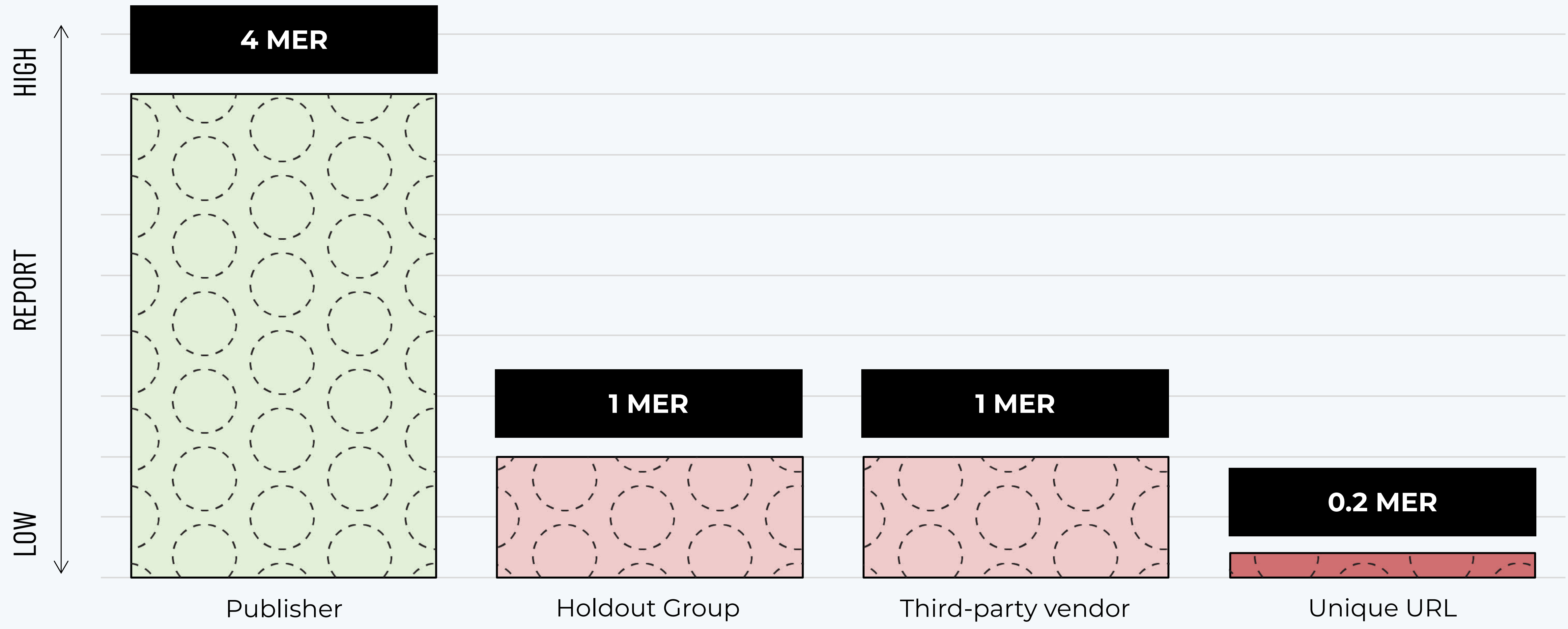
"In many ways, **CTV attribution is even harder than measuring linear TV**."

In the media, Connected TV's measurability tends to receive a more flattering depiction than linear TV.

But that's wrong.

The digital-like capabilities streaming and CTV adopted made it seem like CTV was the solution to TV advertising being notoriously difficult to measure. Giving an offline channel the accountability of online for the first time.

CTV performance discrepancies between sources



But CTV attribution isn't easy. In many ways, it's even harder than measuring linear TV. And the worst part is that even active CTV advertisers can believe their initial results are reliable when they're not.

One example is from a client for whom we ran an early streaming TV test by going direct to a major publisher. At the end of the campaign, the publisher reported the client had achieved a 4 MER (media efficiency ratio), well over the client's goals. But a holdout group showed the campaign had an MER of only 1. We asked a TV measurement vendor to provide an additional opinion, and they also found MER around 1. A final test using a unique URL to track results showed MER at just 0.2.

Depending on the source of results, performance was roughly 20X apart. The same campaign was interpreted as successful and struggling. Now, you might ask, how could this happen? What does make CTV attribution so difficult?

A Fragmented Marketplace

The streaming universe is intensely fragmented across countless platforms, apps, devices and operating systems. Keeping track of who's watching (and when and where) has never been so complex. It's even harder for advertisers using both linear and streaming TV, who have to think about managing frequency or measuring unique reach across two disconnected types of TV.

There's a reason 40% of US marketers claim viewership fragmentation is a top challenge facing converged TV and another 28% cite publisher fragmentation as an issue. Unified cross-platform measurement is, well, not easy. Especially thanks to a lack of standardization across those platforms.

Lack of Universal Standards

38% of marketers point to inconsistent measurement as the real concern. Each publisher uses their own methodology for tracking and reporting streaming impressions. So a marketer trying to review their campaign's reach on Hulu vs Pluto TV could be comparing apples to oranges. Even conversions between linear TV (person-based) and streaming (household-based) have no standard conversion rate yet.

A 2023 survey by the IAB, in partnership with Standard Media Index (SMI) and Advertiser Perceptions, found that 70% of TV/video ad buyers prefer to use at least three different currencies for impression measurement. No longer is there a single standard for measurement like Nielsen was for linear TV decades ago.

And while multiple perspectives can help confirm results, the lack of consistency obscures advertisers' understanding of campaign effectiveness, whether they're reaching the right people, or whether they're reaching anyone at all. After all, 8-10% of streaming impressions are delivered when a TV set is turned off. And publishers overcount impressions from 2.5%-15% across all CTV streaming activity.

IP Matching and Device Graph Pitfalls

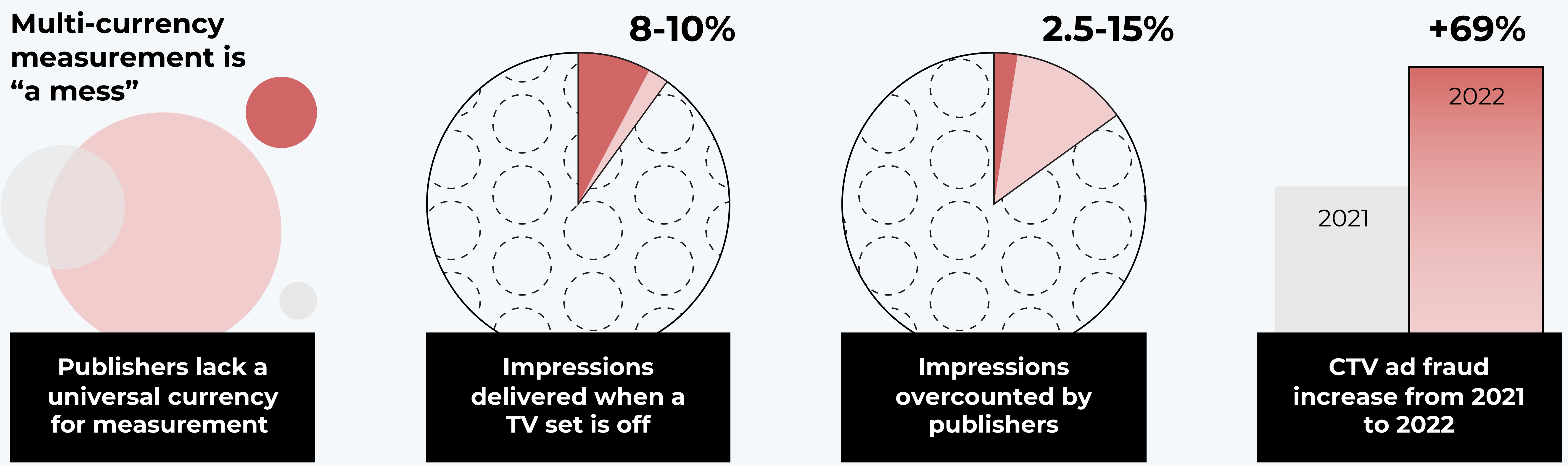
But what about IP matching? This is where the digital hype around CTV is somewhat worthwhile. The ability to help advertisers hit their bullseye target and measure with full accountability is exciting. It's also flawed.

Gaps between user and device still exist for CTV in a way they don't for true digital campaigns. For example, the most common way for CTV viewers to respond to an ad is via their phone, which can lead to the IP address being targeted not matching the one responding. The current solution is device graphs which identify relationships between internet-connected devices. This seems logical, but in practice, IP matching is up against an incredible lack of standardization, with graphs varying wildly from company to company.

- Public places like universities, businesses, coffee shops, and hotels have many internet-connected devices where CTV ads are played, causing device graphs to be less reflective of who is actually watching. Incrementality testing has shown significant measurement challenges in these locations.

- There are multiple types of IP addresses. An advertiser's CTV logs might have a newer or older version of IP to which website tracking pixels can't match.

What makes CTV measurement difficult?



- IP addresses also change. No one's confirmed exactly how regularly this happens, but whether it's twice or three times a year, it does happen, and so far there are no great solutions for this.

We've seen cases where different device graphs increased results by a factor of 10. That's a massive difference. Depending on which graph you're using, the same campaign could be viewed as an incredible success or a dramatic failure.

The Problem with Targeting Households

CTV advertising targets households rather than individuals. This means brands face a fair chance of reaching the wrong person. On average in the US, five people share a single streaming account. All five of those people may watch content, but only one is tied directly to the account—and the IP address.

So when a vacuum ad is targeted to an IP address, which has been mapped to a consumer profile for a 45-year-old man, it may reach his 10-year-old daughter instead. Or you reach his neighbor, friend, or child who lives at college as many streaming viewers confess to sharing their account beyond their household—despite a recent crackdown by streaming services. In fact, 16% of Netflix viewers used someone else's account in 2023, over just 11% in 2022, even though Netflix has been publicly working to reduce account sharing.

Just as frustrating, targeting by IP address alone means you won't hit some households in which one or more of the non-account holders are members of your ideal target audience. You're failing to deliver impressions to potentially large numbers of key prospects.

This all creates natural challenges for measurement. How can you accurately evaluate response when you never reached the people you thought you did?

Rising Ad Fraud
In 2022, CTV ad fraud grew faster than CTV viewership itself according to DoubleVerify. And the problem's far from resolved today—creating additional attribution challenges.

Fake CTV impressions skew the data marketers depend on to assess the performance of their campaigns. This not only misleads advertisers about the true reach and effectiveness of their efforts but also drains ad budgets on views that never reach potential customers.

How to Solve CTV Attribution
CTV is hard to measure. But it's also the future of TV advertising. So... how do we fix it?

It starts with acknowledging the challenges that were just listed and not falling for unproven hype. Then, successful CTV measurement comes back to many of the same principles discussed for linear TV.

1. Start by defining what success means for your campaign.

2. Use multiple attribution models and data sources to verify performance.

3. Don't accept results at face value. Results that feel too good to be true usually are.

But there are also a few additional considerations.

Working with a demand-side-platform (DSP) with direct relationships to publishers to buy and measure CTV can provide some standardization across platforms.

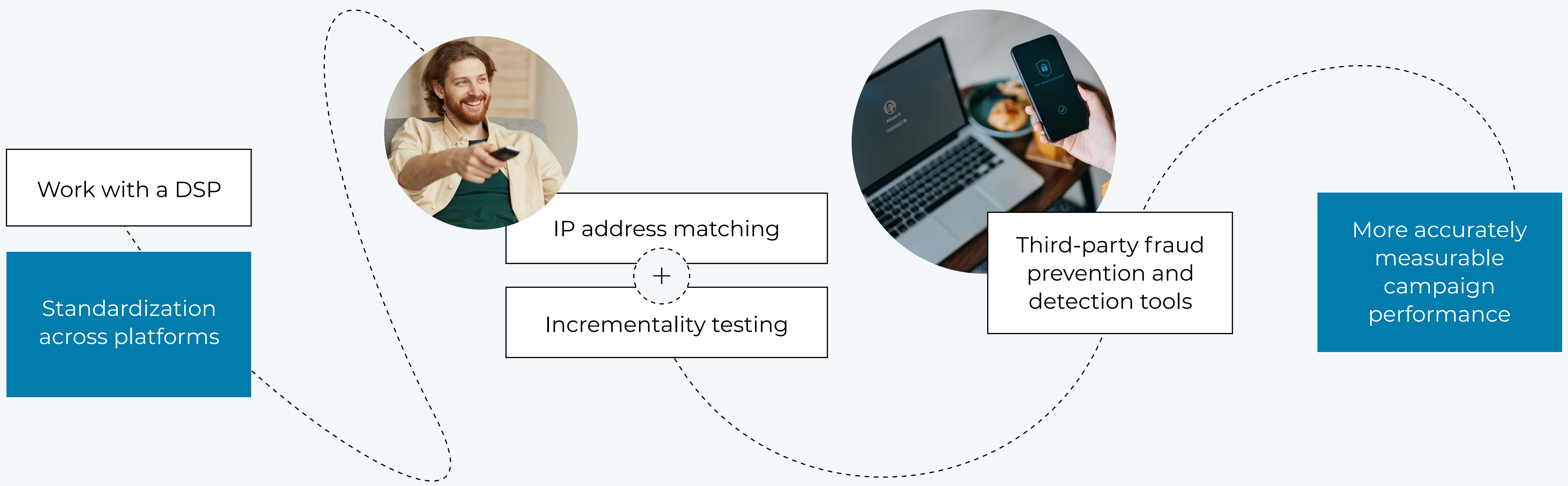
While flawed, IP tracking can still track consumer behavior from ad exposure to conversion, providing unique insight into how viewers respond. To avoid being misled by over-generous device graphs, pair IP tracking with other attribution models, especially incrementality testing, and keep IP's limitations in mind.

And finally, third-party fraud prevention and detection tools can reduce fraud's impact on your campaign—giving you a better understanding of your campaign's performance among real, engaged audiences. Top providers include DoubleVerify, Method Media Intelligence, and Integral Ad Science.

There's been so much promise around streaming and what it could mean for the future of TV advertising. How it could turn a traditionally challenging channel into a highly accountable, highly measurable one.

So far, executing on that promise has been difficult. But we all get closer by approaching streaming with the same rigor and skepticism that should go into measuring any form of TV. Here's one story of how an advertiser tested their way to a highly successful streaming campaign.

CTV attribution best practices



CASE STUDY

How a B2B brand found their CTV audience

Overview

A billion-dollar B2B company had driven profitable growth through TV for years. Linear campaigns with Marketing Architects minimized their reliance on digital and print—especially by reducing painful paid search costs. Best of all, brand awareness rose dramatically, establishing the brand as the top solution in their category. But by 2022, the company was ready to extend their reach by testing connected TV.

Objective

CTV's advanced targeting promised the ability to reach the right people at the right time. For a B2B brand with a target audience that included a range of titles and responsibilities across businesses of all sizes, it seemed like an opportunity. And we were ready to make the most of it.

From partnering with Dun & Bradstreet for third-party data to replicate the brand's audience based on job title and company size, to building look-alike audiences from survey databases to form a customer-originated perspective on who to engage, we invested in highly sophisticated targeting methods. By the end of the year, the brand had tested more than $2 million in media across two industry-leading DSPs and optimized a stunning 37 targeting lines.

Still, while performance met expectations, it couldn't compete with linear. Streaming CPMs were high. And all that advanced targeting? It added to the cost, especially when using third-party data.

Results

There was another option. At Marketing Architects, we built our own DSP to solve the targeting and cost challenges inherent to current industry solutions.

Buying the media directly, our platform removed tech fees that drove up CPMs. Instead of costly third-party data, contextual targeting based on location, genre and daypart allowed us to reach the brand's audience without the typical targeting fees. Finally, we leaned into technology, using machine learning and AI to identify ideal targeting opportunities.

This shift reduced the cost of the brand's CPMs by 43% and led to a 44% more efficient cost-per-order. Today, TV remains a top channel for the brand, and they're continuing to invest in connecting with customers through connected TV.

They saw:

43% more efficient CPMs	63% better CPR	44% better CPO

CONCLUSION

TV MEASUREMENT

Conclusion

“Not everything that can be counted counts, and **not everything that counts can be counted**.”

—William Bruce Cameron

Why do we measure? For most, it’s a combination of justifying past marketing spend and guiding future spend allocation. Validation and prediction.

But there are many ‘hard-to-measure’ marketing channels. According to our survey of TV advertisers, print and social were listed right alongside linear and CTV as being challenging.

All marketing attribution is imperfect. There will always be things we simply can't know. That doesn't mean you shouldn't measure as much as possible.

To know as much as you can about your TV campaign, adopt a critical and open-minded approach to attribution. Instead of over-reliance on a single source to determine success, use multiple models to gain a holistic view of TV's effect, from tracking immediate conversions to understanding TV's role in brand building. Embrace nuance. Get your hands dirty in the data. And take the time to set your campaign up for measurability from the earliest planning stages.

TV's worth understanding. 83% of TV advertisers say TV is and will continue to be a vibrant and powerful way to support their businesses. 79% say TV significantly enhances the effectiveness of their other marketing channels.

The belief in the power of TV is there. It's up to us to prove it.

About Marketing Architects

At Marketing Architects, we offer a solution called ‘All-Inclusive TV.’ Our clients only pay one bill for media, and we cover everything else their campaign needs to succeed on TV, from strategy development to creative pretesting and production to campaign attribution.

Those costs add up. We typically only make money after a client has scaled on TV. This means we’re very motivated to get an accurate understanding of your campaign performance. If it’s not going well, we don’t want you investing more in an initiative that isn’t going to benefit your business. Because we’re invested in that campaign with you. And we only win together.

To learn more about our partnership approach to TV—and how this drives our beliefs about TV attribution—visit **marketingarchitects.com**.