



## MediaPost's MediaDailyNews

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### **Forecast 2005 Asks: Is The Ad Business Dead?**

*by Michael Shields*

A panel of industry bigwigs at yesterday's Forecast 2005 addressed the possibility that the ad business is dead.

The group was asked to wrestle with the following provocative resolve: "As the consumer acquires total control over media, advertising as we know it, and many organizations that depend on it, will die. Those who can adapt can survive."

Most agreed that significant change was imminent in the ad business, but disagreed with the grim assessment of the resolve.

Bob Liodice, president of the Association of National Advertisers, did not agree that the advertising model is broken, although he acknowledged that work needed to be done. "It's about getting back to basics and elevating the level of creativity," he said. "Connection with the consumer is a far greater challenge [today]. The key is to increase accountability."

Laura Desmond of MediaVest talked about embracing change, while emphasizing that a vastly expanded media marketplace necessitated seeking outside help.

"Collaboration is critical," she said. "A long time ago, it was possible to be an expert on one area. Today, you need to be versed in all types of media and communications. The more a company can expand its specialized center, the better."

When in doubt, she added: "Follow the consumer."

Alec Gerster of Initiative Media agreed. "You never go wrong following the consumer," he said.

While the panel grappled with the issues associated with media fragmentation,

Seth Haberman of Visible World, a company which provides software that can be used in delivering more targeted ads to user's cable boxes, was optimistic. "This is a winnable war," he said. "Fragmentation can be your friend."

While optimistic, Haberman urged media planners to work more closely with creative departments in the future, complaining that messages are not always optimized in conjunction with media plans. "We are no longer organized in a way that builds these messages lock step," he said.

Steve Farella of TargetCast was equally attuned to this issue. "The place that I don't see enough work is in partnerships [between media and creative groups]," he said. He even encouraged more media shops to produce their own creative if needed.

Farella also appeared to take a shot at Nielsen, as he railed against the continued practice of spending media dollars on tactics that offer questionable measurement. "As an industry we keep buying them," he said. "It makes absolutely no sense."

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