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## Advanced Ads: Grid Is Good

Rovi, Comcast Spotlight See Strong Demand for Guide Promos

By **Todd Spangler** -- *Multichannel News*, 8/9/2010 12:01:00 AM

For all the talk of the potential for advanced TV advertising, one place where marketing dollars today are freely flowing — and growing — is onscreen program guides.

Operators, including Comcast, as well as Rovi, which sells ad units for its Passport and i-Guide interactive program guides, are seeing demand surge for placement on cable's IPGs.

The biggest IPG advertisers are cable and broadcast programmers looking to prompt viewers to watch or record their shows. Comcast Spotlight, for one, has hit a high-water mark in the category by nearly selling out its IPG ad inventory for September, according to Chip Meehan, vice president of Western division integrated media sales.

"We definitely had programmers who couldn't get in where they wanted," he said. "It shows we've reached a certain maturity in this space."

### STUDIO BUYS

The increased spending, Meehan noted, was driven by the fall broadcast season, coupled with cable counterprogramming and more syndicated shows.

In addition, Comcast is seeing more ad buys from movie studios to promote their video-on-demand titles, Meehan said.

Rovi's IPG ad business also has historically focused on entertainment, with recent clients such as National Geographic Channel, Fox and ABC. Now, it's starting to get more business from consumer packaged goods, auto and other sectors, said Tom Wolfe, senior director of business development.

Recently, advertisers in the Rovi ad network have included Ford and Hellmann's Mayonnaise, which placed clickable ads linking to videos of celebrity chef Bobby Flay.

"It's a highly qualified consumer, because they've clicked through on the ad," he said. Rovi now has a staff of 22 employees dedicated to selling IPG ads and related sponsorships. Thanks to the increased focus, the company grew the number of clients by 89% in the first half of 2010 versus the year before, Wolfe said, though he declined to provide dollar figures or number of impressions served.

The Rovi Advertising Network comprises 15.8 million U.S. households in which its television guides are available, including service providers and active consumer-electronics devices. Cable operators currently in Rovi's IPG network include Time Warner Cable's Los Angeles and Dallas systems, as well as Charter Communications, Insight Communications, Mediacom Communications and Bresnan Communications.

Rovi wants to increase the reach of its IPG ads and is hoping to strike deals with the likes of major distributors like Comcast, DirecTV, Dish Network and others.

"Very simply, the bigger the scale, the better — that's a priority," Wolfe said. "If you have a grid, we are talking to you."

### CAMPAIGN TRACKING

The Rovi Ad Network offers three formats: a "standard portal," to let consumers record a program, set a reminder, watch content or learn more about a product or promotion; a "video portal" that links directly to VOD video content; and a "dynamic portal" comprising video, graphics, text, programming and/or interactive content. Santa Clara, Calif.-based Rovi also provides marketers with set-top box data collected by audience-



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measurement firm Kantar Media to track campaign metrics.

Comcast uses i-Guide, the IPG developed by its joint venture with Rovi, but sells its own ads. Right now those ads are delivered to some 15 million households with Motorola set-tops. By the end of the year, the operator expects to have i-Guide version S25 deployed to an additional 5 million households in its Cisco Systems footprint .

"We see the i-Guide as being the connective tissue for a multiplatform campaign with VOD, the guide and 30-second spots," Meehan said.

According to Rovi, in the first half of 2010:

- 83% of subscribers accessed their guides weekly.
- Viewers visited IPGs 10 times per day on average.
- Guide usage was 10 minutes per day per subscriber.

SOURCE: Rovi

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