



Audit Bureau of Circulations



The Washington Post Completes Second IVS Audit After Successful Beta Test

Situation

In 1877 *The Washington Post* contained four pages, cost three cents, had a circulation of 10,000, was typeset by hand on rag paper from copy written with a heavy black lead pencil, then duplicated by writing with a stylus on thin pads of paper called “flimsies.” Today’s Pulitzer-prize-winning paper is produced out of two state-of-the-art printing plants, one in Springfield, Va., and the other in College Park, Md., by nearly 1,000 people in the production department.

Issue

The development of ABC’s Insert Verification Service audit in 2005 spun out of the best practices group of the NAA/ABC liaison committee, which included **David Dadisman**, vice president of circulation at *The Washington Post*. ABC wanted to get a cross-section of newspapers to participate in beta testing the IVS audit. *The Washington Post* had heard from advertisers that they wanted additional assurance that their preprint inserts were delivered to specified zip codes without insert duplication and that they were getting what they paid for. As a supporter of ABC and realizing the need for the audit, *The Washington Post* agreed to participate in IVS testing that year.

Solution

Feeling confident about its preprint insert process *The Washington Post* volunteered to participate in IVS beta testing. After receiving successful test results and as a way to provide transparency to its advertisers, they officially enrolled in IVS.

Results

After completing its testing, *The Washington Post* enrolled in IVS and completed its first actual audit in 2007 with a proficiency rating of 98.3 percent. Advertisers were pleased *The Washington Post* enrolled in IVS and with its test results.

Before completing its first official audit, *The Washington Post* volunteered to be a part of an ABC beta test.

The Washington Post

“ABC was very receptive to newspapers participating in the test and was open to how we could do things most efficiently.”

— Jay O’Hare, Manager, Circulation Administration,
The Washington Post

“The outstanding results achieved by *The Washington Post* and other leading publishers demonstrate that newspapers serve advertisers extremely well for targeted distribution of the advertising message and that advertisers long-standing confidence in zoned newspaper distribution is well deserved,” said **David Dadisman, vice president of circulation.**

“We did a dry run before the test and based it on the methodology we thought ABC would examine,” said **Jay O’Hare**, manager, circulation administration. “Our NDM is a large market. We pulled samples from about 20 sites in addition to our single copy at two printing plants.”

From the advertising perspective, **Vance Dippold**, advertising manager, stated there was angst and nervousness on what was required from the newspaper for the beta test.

“ABC was very receptive to newspapers participating in the test and was open to how we could do things most efficiently,” added **O’Hare**.

After receiving a proficiency rating of 98.4 percent on its beta test they enrolled in IVS and completed its first actual audit in 2007, with another excellent rating of 98.3 percent.

“For our first official audit we had a base and knew what was going to be done from the circulation field staff who would escort the ABC auditors from one distribution center to another,” said **Dippold**. “Everybody understood what was going on and the time required from them. We came into the test feeling relatively comfortable that we had a high-quality process.”

“ABC was very clear on what data and formats they would need for the audit,” said **O’Hare**. “They clearly understood the time it would take in the field and made very good use of the time. It was run very efficiently.”

“It was important that we had the time and everything staged to make sure ABC had enough folks to cover the ground that we covered and that we had the right folks in place that could execute in essentially a 36-hour period and to be able to pick up the parts,” said **O’Hare**.

The audit involved the integration of several departments. The information gathered from the results were used to improve their production process.

“Everyone at *The Washington Post* is committed to making sure we have a quality newspaper,” said **O’Hare**. “We have a well-defined packaging operation for our Sunday advance package. We have quality control and quality assurance every week and test that on a regular basis. We’ve won the hearts and minds of our folks here and want to make sure advertisers are getting what they’re paying for.”

“All of the information that came back to us from the audit is being used by our production and transportation folks to make improvements in the process,” added **Dippold**.

The Washington Post views having an audit conducted by ABC and receiving high ratings as an advantage over its competitors. Advertisers also look upon the results favorably.

Dippold stressed that when making a presentation to advertisers, the IVS audit rating is proof that you deliver when it comes to pre-print inserts and your accuracy rates number one.

“It’s all about trust, integrity, everything *The Washington Post* stands for,” said **Dippold**. “It’s just one more bullet that we can supply and talk about. We have a Pulitzer-prize-winning newsroom and now this shows that what we deliver day-to-day in terms of advertising is accurate. We’re delivering what they [the advertisers] are buying. We’re delivering audience share to them.”

IVS Audit Timeline

- Held a number of conference calls with ABC.
- Determined the differences in terminology and how to get the data ABC was requesting.
- Met a number of times internally to determine who had what responsibilities, such as who would supply the reports and sample copies of all the pre-prints.
- Identified which package was going to be delivered specifically to a distribution center or dispatched from one of the two press plants.
- Intercepted those packages before they reached the customer’s door and then provided those packages to the auditors.
- Assembled a team of field managers to go out with the auditors to the distribution centers.



For more information on IVS, contact ABC’s **Kristina Meinig**, manager, sales and marketing at (847) 879-8412 or at kristina.meinig@accessabc.com.

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