An Interview with Caroline Moul, Vice President of Digital and Emerging Media at PHD Canada

Caroline Moul began her career at PHD in 2002 as a media planner. Since then, she has led the integration of digital strategy into PHD’s client services offering and was instrumental in the creation of Accuen in Canada, Omnicom Media Group’s agency trading desk.

Moul has won numerous Media Innovation Awards, Canada’s prestigious media awards program, including gold for Best Use of Social Media for AutoTrader.com’s “Cliff Your Ride” campaign. She also led the creation of a customized and integrated homepage for the launch of Honda Fit, as well as the integration of near field communication technology for Scotiabank.

Can you describe your role and responsibilities?

Caroline Moul: I oversee the digital practice within the agency and actively participate on the leadership team in terms of what’s going on with our clients. I’m involved in the day-to-day work as well, with an emphasis on Scotiabank. I ensure that we’ve got the right resources in place, that the teams are accomplishing what needs to be done, and I push clients to further their digital capabilities. In terms of business development, I participate in growing our client base, whether it’s existing business or prospects.

“The system enables us to cultivate innovative media thinking and forces us to think holistically about media and the media mix.”

In addition, I’m involved in developing the digital product and solutions that we take to clients, as well as making sure that not only are those products best-in-class, but that our staff is as well. I spend a lot of time on the education and development of our people and growing their careers within the agency. That has helped us have a really strong history of retention within digital, which is a tough market for keeping people.

What are some of your business priorities?

Moul: We recently launched a holistic planning resource that we call Source, which is essentially a cloud-based global communication planning system that allows us to collaborate through gamification. The system enables us to cultivate innovative media thinking and forces us to think holistically about media and the media mix. It allows us to put together a thoughtful approach to media that encompasses both online and offline channels and also lets us break down the media siloes.
What’s interesting is that it allows us to navigate through paid, owned and earned media so we can figure out, based on our paid media support, what the estimated owned and earned impact would be in terms of additional traffic, impressions, exposure and engagement. This ultimately gives us a weight for the earned part, which is really important for clients because gone are the days that we just look at paid marketing initiatives and think about their impact. This tool allows us to view across paid, owned and earned media and take the entire impact into account.

Another huge focus for us is measurement and analytics. We want to understand what data our clients have and what they can actually leverage in an actionable manner. We also want to make sure that we have holistic measurement—Canada is a little bit slower than other markets to adopt this. We don’t have the capabilities for cross-channel optimization at this point. It’s really important that you have actionable data and that you use that data in a smart way to drive insights and business decisions and to inform your business goals.

In the digital world, we need to look at real-time data that enables us to make decisions about the direction of a campaign. It’s something a lot of agencies are working on. The other part of this is attribution. One of the challenges we’ve had in the digital space is that everything’s measured on a last-click attribution model. That doesn’t necessarily show the value of the whole big picture. With attribution modeling, we can actually determine the effectiveness of the overall campaign.

**How does eMarketer help you do your job?**

**Moul:** Where we lack data from the traditional research resources, such as comScore, Nielsen or any of the other research companies, eMarketer bridges the gap either with other market information that we can use to approximate the Canadian market or by actually providing us with Canadian information.

A great example is the time users spend with mobile. We have no mobile tracking in the Canadian marketplace from a time spent perspective. So when we look through eMarketer, we’re able to get data for that—US numbers that we can reference for this marketplace. We’re able to use that as an approximation, and it gives us an estimate of what we can forecast it to be.

For example, eMarketer content takes a deep dive into native advertising—a topic of interest to us—and from that, we can build a case to take to our clients and to educate internally. eMarketer is the first place we go to look for information on emerging trends and timely releases.

**Do you use eMarketer alerts?**

**Moul:** I have eMarketer alerts set for anything Canada-specific, so every time there’s a new Canadian study, it’s at my fingertips. I take a look at it the day it’s released and can address it with clients the same or next day. Programmatic buying is an area that’s hugely talked about, and the ability to see quarterly numbers in terms of how they’re tracking is very valuable.

**Can you give an example of where eMarketer data helped you solve a business problem?**

**Moul:** Programmatic ad buying is such a huge topic of conversation with our clients. Clients are definitely moving forward, but they don’t know what the right threshold of spend is yet. Having the research readily available with recent data actually allows us to say, “Here’s where the marketplace is” and suggest where they should be. eMarketer data allows us to put context around how we think our clients should be investing and back it up with competitive information.

**“eMarketer data allows us to put context around how we think our clients should be investing and back it up with competitive information.”**

A piece of research on real-time bidding (RTB) in Canada gave us a snapshot on growth—who was spending and what the quarter-over-quarter growth was. It was really great because it was at a timely period where we were in planning for the next fiscal year. That data gave us tangible information from a third party to say to our clients, “Here are your competitors on the list. Do you want to be there, or do you want to keep on waiting?”

**Do you think eMarketer data and intelligence help get clients to agree to a recommended strategy more quickly?**

**Moul:** Absolutely. To be able to quote something from eMarketer or pull out some of the charts and data helps convince them and shows, “This is where the market’s going, and here are the growth trends” or “Here are the consumption trends.” To show the sentiments of CMOs or whoever it may be is hugely impactful. Having
a third party confirm the story we’re trying to tell is important. Our team is using eMarketer on a weekly, if not daily, basis when looking for a rationale to put into presentations, to convince a client of something or to educate a client on how to navigate the digital landscape.

**How critical is eMarketer intelligence for an agency like yours?**

**Moul:** It’s crucial. We have to have this information at our fingertips and on demand. Just as consumers want everything now, our clients want the same from us. We don’t want to wait for however long it may take for somebody to send us a custom study or to do a study ourselves. Those are hindrances to us being able to deliver.

“**People often ask, ‘How do you stay on top of it?’ eMarketer is part of that, and the rest is just built into my DNA.”**

It’s essential that we have eMarketer information readily available to the full team so it’s on top of the latest trends and what’s going on in the market—and so we can share that information with our clients.

**What keeps you enthused about digital marketing and media?**

**Moul:** Emerging platforms is part of my title. I’m unbelievably passionate about anything digital. I love technology and understanding how the consumer uses it and the opportunity it brings to our clients. I want to stay at the forefront of digital and lead our clients, the agency and the industry forward. People often ask, “How do you stay on top of it?” eMarketer is part of that, and the rest is just built into my DNA.

---

**To learn how eMarketer can help your business, please contact us at:**

Direct: 212-763-6010 or Toll-free: 800-405-0844  
sales@emarketer.com  
www.emarketer.com

**Read more interviews with eMarketer clients:**

www.emarketer.com/Corporate/Clients

**Do you have an Inside Digital story to tell?**

Contact David lankelevich at:  
diankelevich@emarketer.com  
Direct: 212-763-6037