WarnerMedia and Xandr Create Private Marketplace for Political Advertisers

In a bid for political ad dollars, WarnerMedia and Xandr are taking another step closer together.

Political and advocacy advertisers can now set up private marketplace deals through Xandr Invest, the ad-tech unit's demand-side platform, to buy inventory across WarnerMedia's digital portfolio.

Jon Mansell, vp of programmatic solutions and partnerships at WarnerMedia, said the tie-up to make inventory for political and advocacy advertisers more readily available particularly focuses on OTT, which is the "highest growth area" of the company's business.

AT&T consolidated the sales teams of its media and ad-tech units in April following the departure of Xandr CEO Brian Lesser. The two companies then presented a joint upfront in May and are now coming together on a political ad offering after another leadership shakeup that saw interim Xandr boss Kirk McDonald leave for GroupM.

Xandr evp of product and business development Mike Welch now leads the ad-tech company, while Joe Hogan, evp of sales and marketing for WarnerMedia, is overseeing Xandr's ad sales team on an interim basis.

WarnerMedia previously didn't accept non-guaranteed political and advocacy programmatic ads. The technical partnership with Xandr includes a vetting process to ensure ads are up to the

publisher’s standards.

Advertisers must upload their ads directly to Xandr’s platform, which kickstarts a two-hour approval process. WarnerMedia then conducts a manual screening of the ads.

Steve Truxal, svp of product management at Xandr, said political advertising helped prop up the business during the early ad spend downturn prompted by the coronavirus pandemic in the U.S. He added that political ad spend through the platform is expected to spike significantly from Labor Day through the November general election.

GroupM projects political ad spend to reach $15 billion in 2020, with about $3 billion spent on digital. Joe Biden’s campaign, for example, has already reserved $60 million in digital inventory, focusing on connected TV.

While this technical integration is exclusive between Xandr and WarnerMedia, Truxal said the ad-tech company also runs preferred inventory deals for political advertisers on non-WarnerMedia sites.

“We’re able to really represent the shared values between Xandr and WarnerMedia, and that specific use case could have really big implications, in a positive way, for both WarnerMedia and the rest of the industry,” added Mansell.

WarnerMedia is the sixth-ranked multiplatform publisher in the U.S. as of July, according to Comscore. Its properties include CNN, TNT, TBS and Adult Swim.

https://www.adweek.com/tv-video/warnermedia-xandr-private-marketplace-political-advertisers/