

UK, IPA TouchPoints: Questions answered

This document contains the answers to some of the most frequently asked questions posed by consumer-centric holistic measurement initiatives looking to get started. The answers were kindly provided by the project owner(s). This is one of several documents designed to help others learn from existing initiatives' experiences.

Roughly how much did each stage of your initiative cost to set up?

The cost of each IPA TouchPoints project exceeded £1m – the major part of the cost of the research itself plus the data fusion, however, there are significant management, marketing and training costs.

Did you have a specific approach for: Advertisers? Agencies? Media owners?

The IPA is the trade association for the UK communications agencies. The request for us to undertake the IPA TouchPoints Initiative came from our major media agencies via their policy making committee – the IPA Media Futures Group. The major reason for this was the recognition that virtually all communications plans were multi-media whilst the major industry research tools were firmly single-medium based – it was thought that the lack of an industry multi-media tool was detrimental to clients' views of the level of professionalism of media agencies.

The member agencies of the IPA Media Futures Group (comprising c.60% of media expenditure) undertook to underwrite the project, however, it was important that this data was to be regarded as 'industry' data and therefore, wanted the whole communications industry to be able to subscribe to it.

In order to make the project viable, the IPA looked for a limited number of media owner partners to help design and fund the project.

We approached media owners directly rather than through their trade bodies, since we thought it would be quicker and easier to get commitment from individual companies. There were various attractions for media owners to participate:

- A growing number of media owners now have cross platform properties. IPA TouchPoints allows them to assess and promote their performance across their full brand portfolio
- The data allowed media owners to have a greater perspective on a brand's communications plans, giving them a view on how budgets could be allocated across media channels rather than just being able to argue for a share of media budget that had already been allocated
- It gave them access to the same planning data/ systems as agencies
- Early sign-up gave them input into the design and content of the survey
- Despite being a significant absolute investment, it is a very cost effective way of accessing this type of data
- It is 'industry' data
- Advertisers supported and encouraged the project from the very start

How did you organize ownership of this initiative?

The ultimate control of the project has always been with agencies. We worked closely with our media owner partners and consulted with them extensively but the final decision always lay with the agencies.

Do you have any 'watch outs' for markets just getting started?

Consumer-centric, multimedia data is in great demand by all sectors of the communications industry; however, its provision does raise several challenges:

- a) **Relevant skill sets:** Although companies have multimedia skills, individual people often do not, therefore, the provision of a desktop, multimedia planning system stretches many potential users' skill sets resulting in a great demand for multimedia training, guides etc.

- b) **Software:** Consideration must be given as to how the data will be delivered to the marketplace. If it is delivered via a bespoke system this will result in significant development/ market support/training costs. If it is delivered by existing software systems, these systems have to rise to the challenge of upgrading their systems to handle this new type of data. Poor or inadequate software systems can severely impact the market's perception of the data itself.

If your multi-media solution incorporates other data sources e.g. industry currencies, then you have to consider whether all the subscribers to your data have access to these other databases.

In many cases, most industry databases are only sold with full access and therefore relatively high cost. However in many cases, you may only be using a small part of the data which can make it very expensive to buy access to the data.

When producing this type of project, the industry has a tendency to project all its data needs/wants onto the project. Therefore, it is essential to manage expectations of the project throughout the development process to avoid disappointment at the end.

For more information visit www.ipatouchpoints.co.uk. If further information is required (beyond what is available on their website) the IPA have agreed to provide assistance to initiatives looking get started. Please note however that there will be a consultancy fee involved. For more information contact Belinda@ipa.co.uk

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