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Guest Comment: The shape of things to come?

Added: Dec 12, 2008

How will search marketing fare in the economic downturn? Keith Hunt, Managing Partner of Results International, examines what lies ahead for the sector.

2009 will be a tough year for digital but to say, as some commentators have, that search will suffer most, is a little misleading.

True, agencies who specialize in paid for search where the barriers to entry are low are likely to fare badly. However, natural search specialists whose craft is considered to be of greater value – done well it outperforms PPC in the ROI stakes – will continue to thrive at the expense of weaker, less sophisticated players. And let's not forget, search will continue to account for the lion's share of digital spend overall.

Though there is some disagreement over the pace of consolidation in the digital sector in 2009, our conversations with agency buyers and sellers indicate that M&A will continue to play a role.

Digital remains a relatively fragmented industry and many clients still view size as an issue. Groups such as DMG are turning in good performances in this turbulent market, proving the worth of their strategy to pull agencies together into an integrated offer.

To date our industry has been characterised by a large number of individual digital specialists and 2009 will probably see more digital groups created to provide a much broader integrated offering to clients.

The larger groups and networks are also catching up fast and are hungry to make digital acquisitions – a sign that the industry is definitely coming of age.

Of course there is always room for best in class players, and this will not change until someone succeeds in delivering integrated services, each of which is on a par with the quality offerings of the specialists.

By Keith Hunt
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UPCOMING EVENTS

Marketing Week NMA Interactive Summit
 Jan 27, 2009

Netimperative Directors Dinner Dublin: Using Social Media to be the Next Obama
 Jan 27, 2009

Dublin Roadshow 2009
 Jan 28, 2009

Netimperative Sector Seminar: Opportunities For Online Retailers In A Changing Climate
 Feb 04, 2009

Netimperative Directors Dinner : 30 Million chances to get LinkedIn
 Feb 05, 2009

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ANALYSIS

Digital media predictions for 2009
 Mobile apps developers, digital agencies and casual gaming firms are set to prosper the most in the digital sector during 2009, according to a new report