



## AffinityX delivers services, powerful workflow and sales support to increase client revenue.

"This relationship has enabled us to target customers we had no ability to work with previously, as we were viewed as a typical-print-centric company. Additionally, this opened the door to a different set of budgets that we were not exposed to before — the companies that we work with typically keep their digital budgets separate from any other kind of advertising. **This has positioned our company to better compete and grow.**"

Rudi Alcott, Director  
Digital Revenue

### The Challenge

Sound Publishing didn't have a solution for offering digital display, mobile, search or social advertising in their local markets beyond their owned-and-operated inventory. Since the Greater Seattle DMA is a highly desirable, wealthy and tech-savvy location, Sound Publishing needed to offer a more complete digital advertising suite to compete with the myriad of other companies trying to erode their base as the leader in local media.

Director of Digital Revenue Rudi Alcott noted, "We considered a number of solutions, but the AffinityX platform offered us the best trafficking and sales management program of the ones we reviewed. The deciding factor for AffinityX was the beginning-to-end platform with all of the tactics that we need to compete in our markets."

### The AffinityX Solution

In early 2017, Sound Publishing rolled out AffinityX AudienceX, a comprehensive digital advertising solution that includes a range of ad types, marketing services and sales enablement.

- **Advertising and Marketing Fulfillment.** Sound Publishing can now offer a complete array of digital advertising, including: display (HTML5), video, native, mobile, Google pay-per-click and Facebook/Instagram. AffinityX also flights the inventory for the client's owned-and-operated (O&O) inventory and Mixpo ads. AffinityX handles all media planning and buying, creative, trafficking, cross-media campaign optimization and reporting. In addition, Sound Publishing also secures additional investment from local businesses by selling AffinityX websites, landing pages and social media profiles for businesses, which are all fulfilled by AffinityX. As with all AffinityX solutions, these are all white labelled and sold under the Sound Publishing brands.

Rudi commented, "We have turned everything over to AffinityX with the exception of branded content (which requires content to be developed and written prior to publication). I try to plan based on the commonly-held belief that AffinityX will administer the back office portion of our business."

- **Sales Enablement.** To train the Sound Publishing Sales Team and drive high closing rates, AffinityX has thorough sales enablement services. In addition to management-level consulting and reporting, a member of the Client

### Sound Publishing's Local Media Challenges

- Needed to have a more complete digital advertising and marketing program
- Highly-competitive market

### The AffinityX Answer

- Extended reach and targeting beyond limited, high-churn O&O inventory
- Complete suite of advertising products and end-to-end trafficking platform
- World-class sales training, management and support for improved close rates

### Wide Array of Solutions

- AffinityX AudienceX display, mobile, search and social ad solution
- Websites, landing pages and social profiles
- Partner portal/cloud-based access to sales and marketing collateral
- IDEA Titan™ Digital Marketing Hub for order management, business intelligence and sales reporting
- Sales enablement and client success team

### Results

- Revenue growth of 15 percent Y-O-Y in digital services
- More complete offering in market that is continually evolving
- Deeper market penetration, ability to sell to new accounts
- Well-trained sales team with higher close rates
- Greater efficiency from managing all products through one system
- Increased competitive edge

"The biggest strengths of the AffinityX services are the variety of products that we can offer to our customers."

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Success Team delivers in-person training, complemented by a weekly virtual training program. The support team AffinityX provides to Sound Publishing includes a Client Success Manager who works with the team to meet revenue goals, a Key Account Sales Director to help on larger and longer-term customer opportunities, a Sales Coordinator who takes on the day-to-day account maintenance and service tasks so their teams can focus on spending time in-market and selling, and a sales help desk. AffinityX even provides custom proposals for every pitch, on an in by 7:00 p.m., out by 7:00 a.m. timeframe.

How important is this component of the solution? According to Rudi, "The operational support is critical, as there is a significant amount of behind-the-scenes work that has to be done to traffic and set up the program. This wouldn't be possible without the AffinityX Client Success Team to guide our sales staff with best practices and what works and doesn't work in the field."

- **Marketing and Sales Support.** As an AffinityX client, Sound Publishing got access to a branded partner portal, the AffinityX cloud-based sales resource center. It allows easy access to a full suite of go-to-market sales and marketing collateral, product documentation, sales training videos and research.
- **Cloud-Based Digital Marketing Hub.** The AffinityX IDEA Titan system empowers client users with effective, easy, consistent procedures for ordering, proofing and tracking products. The system provides Sound Publishing with a central database to track the local businesses they pitch and store key business information to enable easier ordering of future products and capture business intelligence. Additionally, it offers sales leaders insights into the KPIs they need to manage their revenue, such as proposal orders, close ratios, average campaign size and more by sales rep and market.

Sound Publishing was one of the first clients for the new system when it launched in 2017. "AffinityX was onsite several times to make sure the reps understood the system. IDEA Titan allows salespeople to have a CRM where they can schedule and track all of their orders in one place by account. The system then breaks each of these orders down by its tactics so sales and management can see if there are any issues."

*Our extended reach products are averaging an astounding 600 percent increase, but we have not rotated through a full year-over-year comparison yet. I'd be happy with a 50 to 100 percent growth in extended reach as we begin to level off. This would be an ongoing target for us until we achieve market maturity, which I am estimating will be in three to five years. Ultimately, I would like to push our digital growth to 20 percent year-over-year with the addition of some changes in concept to our O&O, which has struggled as of late."*

- **More Complete Offering:** In Rudi's opinion, "The biggest strength of AffinityX is the variety of products that we can now provide to our customers." As a result, Sound Publishing can win new customers and capture greater shares of their marketing budgets. Even better, the company has the ability to compete for and serve the largest advertisers, as well as the smallest ones, and do so profitably.
- **Greater Market Presence:** Because they now have a more complete solution suite, Sound Publishing has targeted and won business in new sectors. In particular, Rudi mentioned, "In terms of vertical markets, we do well in the medical and retail appliance fields and are seeing success with legalized marijuana in Washington state."
- **Competitive Edge:** As noted, the competition in the Seattle market is quite stiff, but the Sound Publishing Team is seeing movement in a positive direction. "It's too early to tell, but we think we are making headway against competition that is currently larger than us in sales and staffing," said Rudi.
- **Greater Efficiency:** Product ordering and workflow are often a challenge for local media sales forces, but the partnership with AffinityX has removed those obstacles for Sound Publishing. Noted Rudi, "Its customer service has been instrumental to us continuing to sell and not getting bogged down in operational issues."

When asked what advice he would give to other local media companies or aspiring marketing services providers, Rudi Alcott summarized, "For other companies with similar challenges, I'd tell them to trust the system and work within it. The staff is knowledgeable and has an incredible desire to learn and adapt to what is happening in the newspaper world."

## Client Benefits

- **Increased Revenue:** When it comes to sales, Rudi commented, "Our revenue has increased based on the extended reach that we can offer. Overall, the salespeople like the ability to sell additional products. AffinityX continues to evolve the product offerings for our customers. The solutions are well-received and very robust. Our digital growth is upwards of 15 percent year-over-year."

### Sound Publishing Snapshot

With its 47 newspaper titles, Sound Publishing is the largest community media organization in Washington State. Sound has a combined print circulation of 592,665 and 2.2 million unique visitors online. Sound employs more than 600 people in 36 locations around the Puget Sound region and eastern Washington. Sound Publishing is a subsidiary of [Black Press Ltd.](#) of Victoria, B.C., Canada.