

SPECIAL PLATFORM



plat-form *noun*: 1. a horizontal surface raised above the level of an adjacent area 2. a place, means, or opportunity for public expression.

In the same vein, blöcher + partner's platforming® methodology is an active process for raising a brand above pools of competing advertisers. **Wolfgang Blöcher, CEO and Founder of blöcher + partner, explains how their unique communication strategy delivers results.**

blöcher + partner was acquired by Carat in January 2006. "We bring to Carat over 10 years of complete 'special ad' know-how," says Wolfgang Blöcher. "We are innovative leaders in Germany; as pioneers, we set benchmarks in the booming market for special advertising. Many clients would like to have this exposure because it lifts the brand up and out of the advertising clutter. If you book your advertising into a classic block with approximately 15 other advertisers, you are one in fifteen. If you have a stand alone position, you capture the viewer's attention completely."

Special ad platforming® is poised to be one of the fastest growing segments of advertising communication. In 2005, the special ad share of total German TV advertising was €420m and the market is gaining momentum. Currently, just about every fifth ad block on German private television includes a special ad exposure, but Carat Germany forecasts this segment of the total television advertising share will be between 20 to 25 percent by 2010.

Traditionally, media companies have utilised what is termed as classic advertising, which includes the 30-second TV commercial and in print, the single or double-page spread. German stations run in 20-minute programme segments followed by an ad-break with 5 - 6 minutes of classic commercials and two

minutes of broadcast trailers. Studies have shown most viewers do not even watch classic ad blocks. The average reach is up to 50% lower than the average reach during the programme and this is why advertisers are seeking special ads, which are strategically placed as closely to the programme as possible or ideally integrated into the programme content.

“In a market like Germany, with more than 40 broadcast stations and over 3 million TV commercials per year, one of the main communication objectives is transforming the brand into a recall winner and raising it above other brands that are all competing for consumer attention,” explains Blöcher. “In a time of shrinking or frozen budgets, clients expect highly efficient solutions.”

“At blöcher + partner, we develop and execute innovative, individualised special ad exposures,” he continues. “They are based on ad time, ad location marketing and programming or editorial expertise as well as on classical brand management. platforming® is the art of bringing everything together creatively, it is a contemporary method of communicating and an authentic USP.”

Clients such as Toyota, Lexus, Mazda, Haribo, Dresdner Bank, Postbank, R+V Insurance, EnBW, and Stern etc. choose to occupy these platforms – often as long-term commitments – since they achieve much higher rates of consumer attention. The most desirable environments on television for platforming® concepts include the evening news, magazines, movies/blockbusters, shows, lottery, and sports (especially German Football League, Football World Cup, and the Olympics). “Thanks to our good relations with the chief editors and ad time marketers of the most important broadcasters and media partners, we are successful in getting our platforming® concepts through,” says Blöcher. “I believe many of these platforming® concepts can be implemented in other countries as well.”

blöcher + partner create platforms in one of three ways. The first is where a platform is created exclusive of either client or brief and

then presented to media partners such as in the ‘Best Seconds’ example. Once the platform has been installed, clients are sought to buy in to the concept. The second method is where bespoke platforms are developed per client brief and the third is where media partners look for both custom platforms (for new marketing revenues) and clients (we can offer them the best places). “Our principle is, we don’t wait for media offers, we invent and develop our own platforms,” says Blöcher.

One example of platforming® in action was achieved through integration with ‘Tagesschau’, the leading news format in Germany. ‘Tagesschau’ presents a 15-minute roundup of news to a large viewer following every evening at 8pm. “This was a real coup in 2001: positioning advertising organically on the main evening news ‘Tagesschau’ on ARD, Germany’s No. 1 state-run television station. We installed a platform called the ‘Best Seconds’, during the countdown of ‘Tagesschau’,” he explains. “The last 10 seconds shows a blue screen with a clock counting down and above the clock there is a split window with a short ad, 7-seconds in duration. It is fully integrated into the ‘Tagesschau’. For the client this achieves maximum attention as well as credibility as the ‘final ad-news of the day’.”



Another example of complete program integration can be seen with the ‘More football, more passion, more goals’ contest. The platform was developed for Bundesliga Sportschau on ARD who wanted an advertising platform, which was completely

interlaced into their sports show. Football fans were invited to vote on the best goal of the week or month over telephone, SMS and the internet. Participants could win prizes totalling over €1 million and the platform was enviable. Teamed with Toyota as their main partner and TV Spielfilm as their media partner, blöcher + partner developed a platform which generated massive exposure, on-air every day, all week, the whole football season. This editorial contest-platform has been the benchmark in special ads over the last three years.

The future of blöcher + partner and the special ad business is very promising. "Our goal is both to continue to create and install innovative platforms as well as transform the existing special ad media offers into highly individualised exposures in-house, so that added value can be achieved for Carat and its clients instead of just booking media space the old way," concludes Blöcher. Increasing brand competition combined with Carat's global reach ensures continuing success both in Germany and the world.



Wolfgang Blöcher

Wolfgang Blöcher, founder and CEO of blöcher+partner platforming® gmbh is 47 years old, married and has lived in Hamburg since 1995.

After finishing university in 1985, he worked in a special agency for sponsoring, first as a trainee and finally as Managing Director and as a business development expert.

In 1995 he founded his own agency in Hamburg, starting out with neither clients nor staff. At present the agency has a staff of twenty employees, over twenty clients and is located right in the centre of Hamburg, Germany. His hobbies include jogging, motor-biking, music and cooking for his wife.

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