Active Interest Media is Growing their Business by Understanding and Wowing Their Hobby Enthusiast Audience

Amanda Phillips, VP of Marketing of Active Interest Media

In 2023, when most media organizations were struggling just to drive repeat visits, Active Interest Media (AIM) was blessed with a passionate, loyal audience base. 30 million hobby enthusiasts regularly engaged with AIM's 25 website brands, email, events, surveys and online courses each year.

Phillips saw that audience and sensed an opportunity. She knew that if AIM could reach its audience in a more personalized, data-driven way, the team could drive even deeper engagement and continue to successfully grow their business.

They wanted to continue their momentum. But their ambitions were limited by their tech stack.

Thus far, Phillips and her team had been using their standalone email platform as a de facto audience database, which kept them from getting the information they needed to personalize their outreach or effectively monetize their audience.

They didn't have a single view of their audience. And that proved costly, Phillips says.

ACTIVE INTEREST MEDIA

Business Overview
Active Interest Media is an Iowa-based publisher specializing in "niche enthusiast magazines." Their portfolio includes about 30 print and digital brands (including 5 brands from their recent acquisition of Taunton Press), online courses, events, podcasts and a marketing services arm.

Business Challenge/Requirement
- Create a single view of their 30 million person audience so they could connect their activity across every channel — including website, email, and display ads — and better serve them through content
- Successfully migrate and integrate audience data from five newly acquired media brands.
- Execute more targeted and effective campaigns without disrupting their workflows or productivity

Strategy and Solution
Active Interest Media has begun a partnership with Omeda, using its audience data platform, to deliver a single view of its audience, execute more targeted, higher-performing campaigns, and pay off on a recent acquisition.

"We were having a hard time feeding in our e-commerce data alongside our fulfillment data, alongside our web behavior and actually doing anything with it," she adds.

Phillips knew she needed a more streamlined way to manage, unify and activate their audience data. But she didn't want to pull her team of growth marketers away from their creative tasks. And AIM's team of developers didn't have bandwidth for audience development tasks either.

"We are not heavy on developers inside the company. We have a development team that supports our websites. But we don't have an extra staff to provide daily support of our marketing automation platform or database," Phillips says. "We were looking for solutions that didn't require us to get too involved on the data management side."

Amanda Phillips
VP of Marketing at Active Interest Media

- Director of Client Services, Catapult Creative Labs (2019-2021)

- Lead Generation Marketing Director (2014-2019)

- Previous experience at Intrado and Penton Media

Leveraging the Omeda advantage

Phillips and her team realized they needed to connect their siloed data, workflows and audience experiences. So AIM turned to Omeda, an integrated audience data platform that combines a CDP with native marketing automation and subscription management solutions. Right now, AIM is in the middle of migrating to Omeda.

Built specifically for professional media and audience teams, Omeda aggregates audience data from every touchpoint and consolidates it in one database via nightly API drops and other automated workflows. Along the way, the data is standardized and cleared of duplicates, so each person's profile is as current and complete as possible.

Now, whenever a hobby enthusiast visits an AIM brand's website or opens an email, it's registered in their pre-existing profile — no manual work is required. In one search, everyone at AIM can see how someone interacts with their entire brand, no matter where they choose to engage.

This gives Phillips and her team the single audience view they need to inform targeting, segmentation, and campaign decision-making.

> "Omeda allowed us to not only store all our audience data in one place, but it allows us to see what those numbers look like and who those people are."

Audience segments also update in real time whenever new audience members meet the underlying criteria. So AIM's email team can quickly query new segments, know they're built on the most accurate data, and build a new campaign for those audiences — all in the same platform.

"That was a big piece of us choosing Omeda — the data side of it," Phillips says. "We liked that the platform was able to handle and manage the data and then offer us an integrated marketing automation solution."

Best of all, the platform has given AIM's small team of marketers more time and space to spend on core tasks.

"Our growth marketers are the ones building the emails and queries. They're marketers, so they need time to develop impactful creative, copy, and do testing. They're not thinking about the development on the backend. So [our solution] had to be user-friendly. We quickly mastered drag-and-drop email design with the Omeda team. This process was a game changer."

As they continue their work with Omeda, AIM's priority goals include:

- **Better understand and engage their website audience:** Phillips wants to use Omeda's website analytics solution to learn more about their website audience, convert their unknown audience into known leads, and harness the data to drive more personalized outreach.

"We're trying to get our website analytics into a better spot so we can get more information about our website audience. We have a goal to convert more unknowns to knowns and have more ability to segment and market to them based on behaviors — and not just email our list time and time and time again."

- **Run more targeted, effective campaigns:** The AIM team uses their Omeda data to run personalizations, behavior-based campaigns, and several new welcome series. Early results have been promising. "In the 10 brands that we moved over and optimized the welcome series for, six to eight of those saw significantly increased click-through rates," Phillips says.

Phillips credits their success to her team's improved processes and systems, as well as Omeda's onboarding team and media-specific expertise.

"When you work with other [larger vendors], they're not focused on media companies, in turn, we've encountered challenges that they may not be equipped to address. Omeda's familiarity with companies similar to ours is invaluable. We find that Omeda understands our concerns, as they are used to navigating similar issues with other clients. Our problems are not new to Omeda."

- **Successfully integrate new brands following an acquisition:** Omeda's onboarding support has become even more important now that AIM has acquired Taunton Press, another B2C media organization with five brands.

The AIM team is now focused on integrating Taunton's audience data with its own to make the most out of the acquisition and add to AIM's overall impact. Phillips credits the Omeda team with helping them streamline the migration and create a new data structure for the newly merged brands.

"We're working with the team at Omeda to merge our data. It's a process," Phillips says. "Omeda's onboarding team has been very helpful in answering our questions and managing the migration."

"We've got a lot of data to pull over and map together," Phillips says, "This unification creates a very large database. It gives us so much insight into our gardening, woodworking, and home-building audiences. I'm excited about that."

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The next move for Active Interest Media: Pursuing audience-centered growth in 2024 and beyond

AIM has already seen promising results with Omeda, but technology can only take you so far if it's not backed by a broader cultural shift. And for Phillips, moving to Omeda has been just one step toward a broader goal to become more data-driven and audience-centric in 2024 and beyond.

"Our move to Omeda was the tipping point to make additional changes in the company that included restructuring our entire marketing department to capitalize on our immediate and next opportunities."

Phillips and her team are trying to grow their top funnel leads as part of that transition. "We're at a point now where growing our audience is paramount. By broadening our audience base, we increase the opportunities to gather more data, and that translates into an increase in subscribers, paid users, and the potential for digital advertising growth, among other benefits."

While there's always been a team dedicated to boosting subscriptions and utilizing email marketing, we're intensifying our efforts to bolster the top of the funnel and expand our audience reach. This initiative includes implementing a robust multi-channel strategy across all brands."

And ultimately, AIM is moving toward a future where they can combine top-quality audience data with excellent content to serve their audience of hobby enthusiasts better.

"At AIM, we want to be known for our quality and actionable audience data. When our advertising sales team is in the market, they have a powerful story to tell. We know our audience, and we have the data points," Phillips says.

"It all starts with engaging content and great publications. We've created and own iconic brands across Active Interest Media, and are focused on making them more valuable for our audience and customers."

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About Omeda

Omeda is a SaaS provider delivering the platform and expertise required to maximize the value of media and publishing businesses' most critical asset — their audience. The platform of choice for B2B and B2C professionals, Omeda's integrated solution, which includes a customer data platform, workflow automation, email automation, and subscription management, provides the professional tools and controls required to maximize a media business' diverse revenue streams, power 24/7 audience development, and orchestrate precise targeting for measurable results. Our platform is built by passionate audience pros, workflow masters, and data nerds who partner with our customers to grow and thrive in a disruptive media world.

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