Turning Ideas Into Innovation: How Annex Business Media Launched New Cross-channel Capabilities and Products With Omeda

Scott Jamieson, President of Annex Business Media and Vesna Moore, Director of Audience Development at Annex Business Media

Business Overview
Annex Business Media is Canada's largest B2B media company, with 4.4 million records across 60+ publications, 75 industry events, a custom content studio, and robust marketing services solutions.

Strategy and Solution
Annex combined Omeda's CDP, email, and marketing automation solution to create Lead Driver, a cross-channel marketing campaign that gives the Annex audience one consistent message across email, display ads, website targeting, events and more.

Outcomes
- 60% increase in engagements
- 93% increase in form fill conversions
- Multiple repeat bookings from advertisers
- More time and resources for optimizing content creation and audience engagement strategy

Anyone can have a big idea. But today's winners are the ones that can get the right systems in place to execute on them.

Scott Jamieson realized this as a group publisher at Annex Business Media in 2014. While running a six-figure, multi-market ad campaign for an insurance company, he was limited by his company's technical capabilities. And the campaign suffered as a result.

"We had a dreadful tech stack when it came to our audience database and our email programs," Jamieson says. "We gave them the desired results, but only after a lot of trial and error and redoes."

"At that point I went to our owners and said, 'If we are going to play in the big leagues, if we're going to do the things that we see happening when we go down to the conferences in the States, we have to invest in our tech stack, we have to invest in technology, and we have to invest in new people.'"

Less than six months later, Annex partnered with Newcom Media to acquire most of Glacier Media's Business Information Group's B2B assets, which kickstarted a massive growth phase for the company. As part of the acquisition, Vesna Moore joined the company as Director of Audience Development.

> If we are going to play in the big leagues, if we're going to do the things that we see happening when we go down to the conferences in the States, we have to invest in our tech stack, we have to invest in technology, and we have to invest in new people."

Moore brought decades of experience in audience development, as well as a forward-thinking approach that matched Annex's ambitions.

"I came into the workforce kind of just before emails existed and websites existed in any real way. So I've seen that whole transition from the old slate and chisel back when we used to do volume electronic mail," Moore says. "And like I've always said, we need to know what that next big responder's going to be. I'm always looking for that next big responder — because our historical responders perform so well, then they dissipate and the next one comes along."

Together, Jamieson and Moore stood up Annex's audience strategy. Since then, Annex has become Canada's biggest B2B media company, with 60 publications, 75 industry events, a custom content studio, marketing services division and a podcast in its portfolio.

Scott Jamieson
President and Chief Operating Officer, Annex Business Media

- Chief Operating Officer (2019 - Feb 2023)
- Group Publisher and Director of Events and Audience (2009-2019)
- Editor and Group Publisher (2004-2009)

Vesna Moore
Director of Audience Management, Annex Business Media

- Previous experience in circulation at CLB Media, CDS Global and Style Communications

With success comes accountability

But with that success came new challenges. That included:

- Annex has 10 million audience members across their website, email, print, events, podcasts, and other channels. The Annex team needed an easier way to see how people were interacting with them across every channel in one glance.
- But just having the information wasn't enough. They also needed a way to use that information to deliver the customized content and experience their audience expects. And they needed to quickly implement it across email, website and advertising.
- Each of Annex's 60+ publications runs like its own business. That gave each team its own creative autonomy — but it also created data silos. So, the Annex team needed tools to empower individual contributors to run campaigns from start to finish, with minimal IT or other team interventions.
- They needed a tool that could eliminate data silos and automate as much of the audience engagement process as possible.

By 2019, they knew their pre-existing tech stack didn't have what they needed to reach their goals. "Even though we did have our in-house system, which was very specifically designed to work for us, it was constrained because it was a standalone application," Moore says.

Annex leverages the Omeda advantage

But buying more tech wasn't the answer. They needed the right tech — a single integrated solution that would help them reach their audience across every channel without creating excess busy work and hurting their culture.

"People should still be able to go home at 4:30. No matter what you sell, we should be able to finish it Friday at 1:30," Jamieson says.

So in early 2020, Jamieson and Moore turned to Omeda, an all-in-one audience marketing platform with a native customer data platform (CDP), omnichannel marketing automation solution, and subscription management capabilities.

Built explicitly for media and publishing businesses, Omeda takes audience data from every touchpoint – from email and website to print, events and ads — and consolidates it in one database with automated workflows. No code or uploads necessary!

Now, every time someone visits an Annex brand's website or opens an email, it's registered in the person's pre-existing profile — no manual work is required. In one search, anyone at Annex can get the most current, complete view of their audience — and use it to personalize content, perfect their content strategy and create more lucrative ad packages.

Customer Data Platform (CDP)

Omnichannel Marketing Automation

Subscription Management

The integrated database was a huge draw for Moore and her team. "Having everything in one singular database — the email deployment as well as the audience management — was a game changer. Being able to see the stats and the deployments and setting up the queries without worrying about working with a third party system, all of that was really key for us," she says.

Marketing segments also update in real time as audience members meet the underlying criteria. And since Omeda has a native email and marketing automation solution, the team can create and automate a dedicated campaign for each new segment without leaving the platform.

That was another significant opportunity for Moore's team. Rather than building segments from scratch and creating campaigns for email, display ads, and websites, Moore's team can easily pull a segment and target that group with one campaign across all three platforms.

> But buying more tech wasn't the answer. They needed the right tech — a single integrated solution that would help them reach their audience across every channel without creating excess busy work and hurting their culture.

Diving in the deep end

Learning any new software is challenging. Onboarding a tool that touches many different parts of the business is even more difficult. Doing so during the early days of COVID added to the challenge.

But Omeda helped them combat their uncertainty and master the product more quickly, Moore says.

"One of the things that I [told my team] is that we're not alone in this. We also had formal training and we could get it as many times as we needed to learn the streamlined approach to audience development and marketing."

Harnessing unified data for innovation: Lead Driver

After automating data management with Omeda, Moore and her team had time to find untapped opportunities.

Among them: Annex has 4.4 million audience members across all its publications and channels. But pre-Omeda, they weren't giving their advertisers one way to reach that entire audience across every touchpoint.

Their advertisers might've run a campaign on email or done separate ads on a few different channels. But they were missing opportunities to reach relevant Annex readers. That hurt their ROI – and kept the Annex team from substantial revenue.

Marketing segments also update in real time as audience members meet the underlying criteria. And since Omeda has a native email and marketing automation solution, the team can create and automate a dedicated campaign for each new segment without leaving the platform.

That was another significant opportunity for Moore's team. Rather than building segments from scratch and creating campaigns for email, display ads, and websites, Moore's team can easily pull a segment and target that group with one campaign across all three platforms.

To address that need, Moore and her team created Lead Driver, an omni-channel ad package that consists of the following:

- An exclusive first-party list of leads
- A 4-email automated campaign through Omeda's marketing automation platform
- A pop-up modal on the brand site
- A social media ad on LinkedIn or Facebook
- An eNewsletter Sponsored Spotlight
- A personalized Landing Page
- Content gating
- Lead scoring using CDP data and Omeda's Audience Builder

Lead Driver+ expands on the standard offering to include:

- 100,000 omnichannel Impressions
- Programmatic advertising packages, both on open exchanges and networks
- Expanded social media targeting on LinkedIn, Facebook, TikTok, and/or Instagram
- Search placements on Google, Bing and/or Yahoo browsers

With Lead Driver, Annex advertisers can position themselves as authorities and connect more deeply with prospective customers. Since their targeting is built on Annex's unified audience profiles, their partners know they're reaching the right people with the right offer – and putting their money in the right place.

The results have borne this out: In the first campaign alone, Annex's partner saw a:

- 60% increase in total engagements (clicks)
- 93% increase in total conversions (form fills), all of which were given to the client
- Annex's advertising partner closed 5 sales as a result of the campaign.

Since then, the Annex team has done 71 Lead Driver+ campaigns, with many clients coming on for a 2nd, 3rd or even 4th round.

Going forward, Moore wants to roll out a new annual program for those repeat buyers. Beyond that, she wants to create a new premium tier with even more offerings, including post lead nurturing abilities to help drive the funnel further, as well as more integrated final reporting across the full customer journey.

60%
increase in total engagements in the first campaign

93%
increase in total conversions in the first campaign
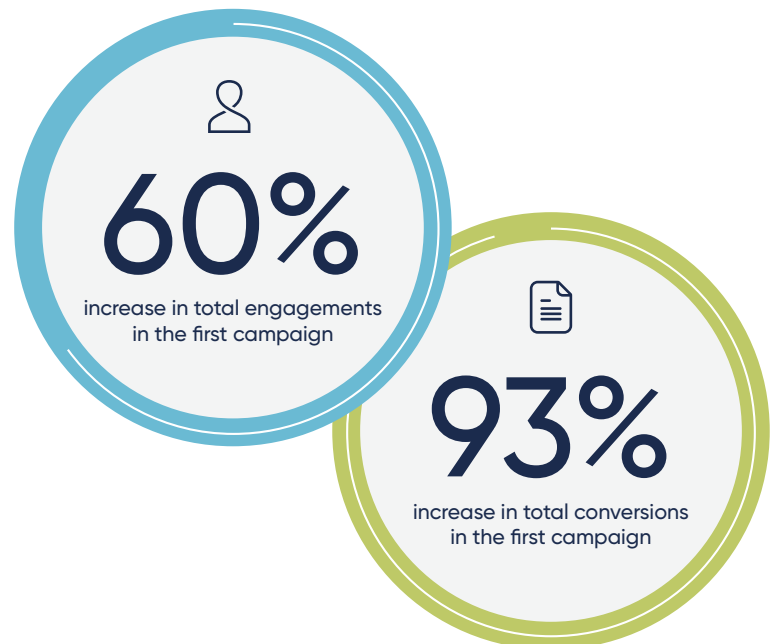
The secret sauce for Annex success

What's behind Annex's success? After 20 years at Annex, Jamieson has a few key takeaways:

A solutions-focused culture: Jamieson attributes Annex's success to their scrappy startup approach.

"If 6 months into a year, it doesn't look like we're going to make our budget, we don't just shrug our shoulders and say, 'I guess when we budget next year, we'll do it differently,'" Jamieson says. "We come up with all kinds of new products, new projects, new contests, whatever it takes to ensure that we hit those budget numbers."

The right partners: The right vendor doesn't just give you the right features. They partner with you to deliver on your goals in a way that makes sense for your organization. They fit you, not the other way around.

That's the case with Omeda, Jamieson says. "[Omeda is], for a big company, willing to be inconsistent and help us do the odd thing that maybe nobody else wants to do... They must have that same culture, that's how we operate."

Being consistently inconsistent: Annex has a powerful brand. But Jamieson knows that forcing every publication to adhere to a single formula restricts their creativity. So Jamieson encourages each individual publication to find its voice, rather than sticking to arbitrary brand guidelines.

> The right vendor doesn't just give you the right features. They partner with you to deliver on your goals in a way that makes sense for your organization. They fit you, not the other way around.

"People say that we need to be consistent and I'll go, 'That's great, but we want people to run their magazines.' It's their own business and we want them to take risks. So as convenient as consistency is, it contradicts several of our values if taken too far."

But it takes time and intention to differentiate your content. And now that they're automating the admin side of audience management through Omeda, each brand has more space to do just that. And from there, they can focus on what really matters — connecting with their audience.

omeda

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.

For more information visit
omeda.com

Request a demo at
omeda.com/demo