

Transcript A100 Podcast: Uncovering New Revenue Streams with Out of Home Advertising

[00:00:00] Welcome to The Association 100 podcast. The A100 podcast is an extension of our Association 100 bimonthly newsletter that focuses on best practices, top trends, helpful ideas and smart strategies and tactics that work in the world of associations. The podcast will feature meaningful conversations with association professionals across the country taking a deeper dive into trending topics offering insights that both inform and inspire.

Colleen Gallagher: Welcome back to the A100 podcast. I'm Colleen Gallagher and I'm joined by my co host Meghan Henning. I'm thrilled to welcome our guest today. Song Heo. Song is the SVP of media strategy and client partnerships with EMC outdoor. I had the pleasure of connecting with the EMC outdoor team at a conference I went to last year.

And when I learned more about what they did, I just knew this was something that our audience had to hear. And I think all of you will love to learn more about, I can't wait to hear what she has to share with us today. So thanks so much [00:01:00] for joining us Song.

Song Heo: Thanks so much, Colleen. I really appreciate the opportunity to help share about this part of the world.

I think it will be a nice educational experience for association professionals and look into areas where we might be able to help uncover some new opportunities for them.

Colleen Gallagher: So let's set the stage here. Tell us a bit more about EMC Outdoor, who you are, what you all do.

Song Heo: Of course. Outdoor is part of our name, but our main goal before I get to what it is that we do, our main goal is really to help our clients and their world help connect and engage with their audiences. People that are important to what they do – in the physical world. And we'll talk a little bit more about that, I think, in terms of the association world itself and trade show marketing.

But a little bit more information about our agency and our business. First and foremost, we're a certified woman owned business. And for over 32 years, we've been helping our clients drive business growth through the strategic use of out of home media. Specifically [00:02:00] about myself, I've been with EMC almost 24 years in April, it will be 24 years.

I've worked on front of house and back of house for you using restaurant terms. But for the first 15 years of my career here. I was the operational sort of backbone of the business when we were 2,3,4 people and trying to create a peer to peer network, all of the network related things and from marketing to accounting to, taking sales calls.

I've done it all - wore many hats. Definitely jack of all trades here at EMC. But in the last less than a decade or so now, we've been focused more on client facing and that speaks to some of my initial background. I, out of college, I worked for Johnson and Johnson as my first real job.

And worked in sales and marketing there and helped to launch Acuvue disposable contact lenses in Seoul, South Korea. So I worked with their international division – cut my [00:03:00] teeth there, lots

of fun and traveling internationally, but some really great experiences with an amazing company at that point.

So I have that sort of client facing side, but when I joined EMC as part of the family business. At that time, my boyfriend said, Hey, my sister needs help. Why don't you come and help us? And I on a lark said, okay let's try something new and different.

And now fast forward. I am SVP of client partnerships on the trade show marketing side. So I help lead the team, really engaging both associations as well as advertisers based on the sort of foundational piece of where we started 30 some odd years ago, where advertisers were looking to us to help them to increase their presence at key trade shows and industry meetings.

So that's where the impetus for and the beginnings of our agency work on the trade show side began.

Colleen Gallagher: I love that. And we'll be sure to include a link to your website in our show notes, but I encourage everyone to go check out the bios page [00:04:00] because I thought it was so fun. I loved the favorite sandwich and things like that - little Funny things that were in there too to get to know people on your team. So I thought that was cool.

You mentioned out of home advertising or O-O-H and I know some of our listeners probably do that a lot with their sponsors. It's very engaging. And then some of our listeners sitting there and saying, what is that? So can you tell us what does out of home mean?

Song Heo: Yeah, as a definition of, first of all, out of home, objectively speaking, it's definitely an odd combination of words.

So even saying it's a little bit awkward, but it's literally any media or any advertising that's outside of the residential home, thus the out of home portion. So from an example perspective, so TV, radio, print,

traditional kinds of media. Of course, those landscapes have all been changing quite a bit over the last 10 years, but anything outside of those things that make it into the residential home is what's in the bucket of out of home.

And out of home is quite a large umbrella. It can be very [00:05:00] traditional things like billboards and airport advertising from a business. Traveler perspective to things like at your local coffee shop, there might be a video screen that has a closed loop of advertisers and local information and such it can run the gamut, dry cleaning bags.

That kind of thing. Out of home is a really large bucket. But the important part is that out of home really helps to reach audiences in mass. So a lot of reach. For that media channel. And in particular for trade shows, it allows us to really target those audiences in that physical world and engage them in those pathways.

Those physical pathways where we're gonna be able to have the most impact and create those touch points that are important for those short live events.

Meghan Henning: So why should association professionals particularly care about out of home advertising?

Song Heo: They should be really thinking about it on [00:06:00] two levels with one main driver. We keep thinking about audience first, right? So the audience that we want to target out of home is particularly unique because it is in the physical space. It's a one to many medium, and I think, in terms of, let's say, data and what's available for information that can help gauge the relative success of any campaign, but specifically on two levels, again, the main driver being audience one, we know attendance is going to be an important driver, obviously one of the most important metrics for any association.

But based on marketing data on who the audience is taking that physical media landscape, literally the physical geography of that target region.

So we're talking about it at two levels. One, the association wants to find more attendees coming to the event itself. So from a B to C perspective, what are those geographies that are going to be the most important? [00:07:00] Where is there the most opportunity to find new audiences? Those that already know about your conference or show will likely come again.

But those that are new, that might be adjacent, that might not necessarily know, you. Place and time that it's coming to your particular city. Finding where those audiences are often. It may be your digital online target audience that will help inform who we need to look for in the physical spaces.

So are they males of a certain age? Women of a certain age? What do they like to do? So what are their behaviors, both online and in the physical world, but particularly in the physical world, because that'll inform where we look in terms of the media landscape.

We can also, once we identify those segments and profiles of that audience, look at that media landscape in that geography and say, okay, these media categories best target that particular audience, or they index higher. These locations versus those locations, so there's a [00:08:00] lot of information primarily because our phones obviously go with us and they our proxy to our location quite honestly.

Where our phones go is where we are and our on our online behaviors. Often is a proxy to that location, too, right? So a lot of information that comes from our phones, that metadata that we can access through, the different platforms and tools that we have helped inform where we look first.

And what media then we'd consider within that geography.

Meghan Henning: That is really fascinating because it benefits the organization through this audience, finding the audience, but then can break it down even further into demographics. I find that really super interesting.

Song Heo: Yeah. So for industry exhibitors, so for those exhibitors who are coming and showcasing their information, their wares, their products. it's important for them to the relative success of your exhibitors, especially for [00:09:00] association professionals, is reflective of your own success.

You want to make sure that your exhibitors are successful in what they want to do and achieve. So part of this conversation is really providing advertising and promotional opportunities that can then be turned into sponsorships. It can also generate revenue for the association, so creating that sort of win scenario.

Creating a new sponsorship opportunity for your exhibitors that can help to enhance and elevate their presence, but also at the same time, create a sponsorship opportunity for literal dollars that can be created for the association. And we know that for some associations, they may be not for profit.

And the annual meeting, their biggest meeting, may be a key opportunity for them to generate these very valuable revenue dollars. That's also a way that we can help utilize the advertising opportunities. Then moving on the what are some successful outcomes we've had for associations through the use of out of [00:10:00] home.

Lots of factors play into the relative success for association sponsorships via. Advertising opportunities in the out of home

landscape. I want to first reiterate why, again, it's important for associations to think about out of home to uncover new opportunities and increase additional revenue.

Opportunities for themselves, for their association to provide really effective solutions that help exhibitors succeed, increase attendee engagement, drive traffic to their booth, raise their visibility and presence, supporting their particular ROIs and success metrics. And then lastly, to mitigate risks, associations have a lot on their plates, And even if they've maybe seen some of this advertising and think, gosh, we're losing some of those revenue dollars, they just don't know where to start.

It's a lot. It's daunting. There are a lot of moving parts. And so through a trusted partner and extension of their team, with little to [00:11:00] no bandwidth or resources needed on their end, they can really tap into some uncovered untapped revenue. Practical factors like the convention city.

Let's say the cityscape and it's. Personality for instance, what we would recommend in a city like San Diego would be far different than something we'd recommend in a city like Chicago or San Francisco or New Orleans. Let's say additionally, the media landscape. So we think about gosh, that attendee journey.

How are they physically coming into the market? What sort of mode of transportation is it by vehicle airport train? All of those things. And then what are the media that are obviously going to be within those landscapes that we can then think about? Okay, great. How can we help to the exhibitor to message and connect with those attendees that are coming in?

Meghan Henning: That's really very cool.

Let's talk about some examples.

Song Heo: Great. I do have a [00:12:00] couple of examples. The first is of a new association partner in a more challenging market like Seattle. In this case, with a relatively limited inventory landscape we were able to help generate in that 1st year \$100,000 dollars. That's literally dollars for the association.

It's not overall sort of dollars. We generated of which they get a portion of that. It's \$100,000 dollars. We write a check to them at the end and they get that as part of their revenue. That was the setup that we created as part of the prep and planning for the association partnership process and derived from the advertising sales that we helped create with in partnership with that association.

The competitive landscape is high and the association was open to providing a wide array of options. And those were a couple of factors. Why that particular 1st year is often the 1st year can be a little bit wonky because the sales window might be a little bit smaller. And because it's new, not everyone is moving at, [00:13:00] the normal sort of pace as it were, if it were an established partnership. But a 2nd example that I'd like to move to as well is with a partner that we're going on, I think, 7 or 8 years of partnership with them. The factors in this particular case, the convention city was San Francisco. Lots of media, especially around the convention corridor in that particular city.

We were able to generate well over 420,000. That's again, 420,000 in association revenue dollars and this happens with the right factors. The association gets it. They understand how they can leverage this to generate revenue for themselves. The convention city and the available media landscape within that city and the relative competitive environment, because you have to be willing.

Advertisers that sort of understand the value of their presence beyond their booth. And although they've invested a lot, obviously, in the exhibit booth itself, they [00:14:00] are okay. People are going in between from the hotel to the convention center from the hotel to

the bars and restaurants there. And in the in between of those movements is a valuable opportunity to get impactful share of voice that's different from the very cluttered and often very busy visual scape, if you will, inside the convention's four walls.

Colleen Gallagher: That's great. I think that's exciting for any association to hear that there's that opportunity there.

It's something associations are all looking at is how do we find non dues revenue. So there's a great opportunity to look at this for trade shows. And one thing I really loved I found on your site also was the research survey you put out beyond the booth. And you break down the attitudinal segments of Exhibitors Towards Sponsorship into three separate segments.

I'd love to hear a bit more about your insights from that study.

Song Heo: Yeah, the study was really a first for us. Coming out of COVID, we wanted a way to really generate great [00:15:00] conversation to foment excitement around live events again. Because we. didn't at that point, going through COVID, everything halted.

We were all quite honestly scared about what this meant and the implications of it. But coming out of it, and we got a handle of the realities of our new world, we thought, okay, I'm sure associations would find it helpful to understand what's moving the world of events and what do exhibitors think about, specifically sponsorships and how can this new world be different in a way that's.

Valuable for those exhibitors. We found a range of common opinions consistent across the study group, and these findings.

Offered essentially insights into how event organizations can work with their exhibitors to help them have a better experience and maximize the available revenue from sponsorships, right? So those

were the two main things here. Specifically, there were three groups, three [00:16:00] attitudinal groups.

There was the discriminating group, the enthusiastic and struggling. I'm going to focus on the struggling group and in our particular conversation and what sort of challenges they need to overcome. This group, first and foremost, struggles with just about every aspect.

Of industry meetings from identifying which ones to go to and what makes for ultimately a successful event for them. They often say that leadership puts a lot of pressure on them to deliver on ROI from events. I think that's pretty much every group, but they have a harder time with that, I think, because there's so many aspects of getting to making, producing a trade show event for themselves, not the event, but the booth event for themselves.

Additionally I think due to limited resources, they exhibit the the same way at every show. At every event, they're exhibiting and doing the same things, but expecting something different, which again, is the definition [00:17:00] of insanity, of course, so right, but for them. So this presents an opportunity, I think, for associations, which is how can we help them to be successful?

So what are they? Two things that are going to make them most successful because they have so many things that they're struggling with, helping them to focus on what are the one or two things that we can help you with? So if they're new are there resources at the ready for those that are new exhibitors?

Is lead retrieval affordable? Because across the board, leads are going to be an important metric on ROI for any, whether you're enthusiastic. Discriminating or struggling. Are there built in activities to encourage attendees to visit exhibitors? For example scavenger hunts and the like?

Doing more for those with smaller budgets, knowing that sometimes those newer exhibitors are struggling exhibitors, if they can turn it around, can turn into larger sponsors and [00:18:00] partners in the future. And that ultimately for an association, that's an important part of, right?

Attendance and then exhibitor success, right?

Colleen Gallagher: Yeah, for sure. Is there a way that Out of Home can help these struggling group overcome those challenges you talked about?

Song Heo: Yeah, I think the nice thing about out of home in particular is that things are scalable.

So we help very new exhibitors, often exhibitors who may have lost and missed some of the deadlines, to take advantage of the in convention corridor in convention venue opportunities because they couldn't decide if they wanted to exhibit or were going to be exhibiting, and they came in last minute and all the opportunities are gone.

Great, let's create. Your presence in a different way outside of the convention space. In a non cluttered, creating your own share of voice, near and around the convention space or other points of interest that are important [00:19:00] to the attendees that you want to get to, right? For a mobile billboard, you can have a budget that's less than 10, 000 that you can have an entry point.

You don't have to be a large exhibitor that spends 100, 000 on their advertising outside of the convention space. You can start with something really small and still have a really impactful campaign. We're customizing the route, targeting the right locations. It's your medium unto itself.

You don't have to share that space with anyone else.

Colleen Gallagher: So that's so interesting. And I think a really good way to help them and provide some ROI and hopefully keep them coming back as sponsors instead of losing them. Meghan and I have been to a lot of trade shows over the years from when we worked in associations to now working with a lot of association clients.

So we've seen all sorts of cool advertisements that as you're leaving the convention center and walking back to the hotel, there are so many different innovative things out there. What would you say are some of the most innovative or memorable? Out of home campaigns you've gotten to work on with clients.

Song Heo: Yeah, there's so many.

So for example at a [00:20:00] large medical conference. And , I think medical conferences and medical associations tend to be fairly rigid and slow moving and very conservative. It's a very highly regulated industry. And so in turn advertisers and brands tend to be conservative, but in this particular case a team had a PR idea, which then in turn ballooned into and flowered into a chalk art campaign.

So they wanted to be able to not only brand themselves in a new and unique way, but also leverage that not only for the paid media, but really more importantly for the earned media that they can get by generating imagery and marketing materials and video and such that they can then leverage across social media.

In this particular case they had two physical 3D chalk art activations, this was in Chicago, in the Lakefront Museum area, and then also had a 2D [00:21:00] chalk art, large chalk art wall Inside their booth marry all of that together and create a cohesive front.

The P. R. piece was really to tie in the science and math associated with the new cancer technology. And for anyone who participated hashtag that campaign's name that it was to help fund a donation to local public schools that really focused on science and math

curricula. And so just all the way around, it was successful in every aspect understanding what the objectives were and bringing that to life in every way.

So that was a really fun program to work on.

Meghan Henning: That's so creative. That's great. So I was looking on your website and I noticed that experiential activations are a big part of what you do. Can you share some examples [00:22:00] of how this has been effectively used by an association to enhance member engagement.

Song Heo: Yes. Out of home in general I think of it as one big experience, everything about it, cause it's in the physical world, but by definition, the experiential aspect to our services is really about creating one on one engagement.

So it's creating an environment where you can have one on one engagement and unlike traditional out of home media, let's say a billboard or airport advertising.

It's not personalized in any way. Now it can be targeted to a specific audience. So if let's say you or I were coming in for a conference, the other probably Okay. 95 percent of the airport audience that's there that's going through that airport is not related to that conference, but it is targeting you and me is that smaller percentage.

Conversely or differently, the chalk art campaign as an experiential example [00:23:00] allows us to get up close and personal and engage with the audience one to one so that we can create a more memorable experience. That's very personal to that person so they can then go share. In their social networks, so on and so forth.

You can leverage those engagements to obviously amplify further in your own social channels.

Meghan Henning: And for associations that are looking to do this, what are the first steps that you would recommend for them, to get started?

Song Heo: Sure. I think it's really thinking about how do we tackle this and where can we create the most sort of valuable solutions for our exhibitors while at the same time it then creates an opportunity for us to create a revenue generator, right?

Colleen Gallagher: I think this is really valuable for any of our association listeners who are looking for ways to enhance the experience for their exhibitors, for their attendees, really everyone at their upcoming trade shows shifting gears a little bit though. We love to end every [00:24:00] podcast with our just for fun questions.

So these are easy, I promise we kick off with where did you grow up?

Song Heo: Yeah. So I have a long story and a complicated story, but nonetheless, I was born in Seoul, South Korea. So I'm Korean. And then immigrated to the U. S. with my parents way back in the mid seventies and have lived in the greater Philadelphia area mostly.

Since I've done obviously some traveling and working internationally elsewhere, but primarily here in the Philadelphia area and love it. Very cool. What's your Starbucks order? Oh, it's I love matcha lattes. So just a straight order matcha latte, maybe slightly less sweet, but matcha latte.

Colleen Gallagher: Nice I like it. If you won the lottery tomorrow, would you still work?

Song Heo: Oh gosh. There's some times that I think, yes, I definitely will continue to work. And there are times where I'm like, oh, I've had enough. I think I'd like to go ahead and be somewhere warm on a beach and sipping my cocktail [00:25:00] and reading a good book.

Colleen Gallagher: I hear you. Somewhere warm sounds great. What's the last show that you binge watched?

Song Heo: The last show that I binge watched. Okay. So I love Gilded Age. I don't know if you ladies know. So just the second season just ended and I can't wait for the third. Apparently they've renewed it, but it takes a while. for them to film. So we might not get any new episodes until 2025.

So I'll need to find a new show.

Colleen Gallagher: That's a long way. All right. What's a food you can't live without?

Song Heo: Oh gosh. I'm Korean. So kimchi is something that I probably could not live without. And I also am trying to lessen my carbs and because I am Asian, the carb that I can't live without is rice. I can actually do pretty well with bread and pasta, but rice seems to always somehow make it in.

So I'm trying to, [00:26:00] I'm trying to do the cauliflower rice, but it just doesn't quite. It's hard.

Colleen Gallagher: Yeah. Not the same. Too funny. All right. It sounds like you love to travel. So tell us your bucket list travel destination. Yeah.

Song Heo: Oh, gosh. The list is very long. However, my mom is turning 80 this year. And so I'm going to take her for a relatively long trip to South Korea.

So she and I are going to do some sightseeing, seeing some relatives. My brother might join us for a little bit of a shoot. He lives out on the west coast of the U. S. But yeah, so that's on the list. We probably gonna fit in a little bit of a tour into Japan. We're not quite sure where yet. So the fun will be in the planning.

Love to go to Australia, South Africa. Lots of different places, really.

Colleen Gallagher: That's amazing. I love it. I would love to go everywhere, too. So I understand. Song, thank you so much for your great insights today and just the conversation. We really enjoyed it and appreciate you [00:27:00] being with us on the A100.

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