

## Thriving With Change

One year after its MPH acquisition, Tony Besasie says Cannella Media is well positioned in the evolving linear and digital media marketplace.

BY THOMAS HAIRE

Since early 2016, when Cannella Response Television acquired Media Properties Holdings (MPH) — parent company of automated advertising platform AdMore, short-form direct-response provider REVShare, and Lead Generation Technologies (LGT) — the Burlington, Wis.-based business (with offices in Los Angeles, New York, and Temecula, Calif.) has been operating under the Cannella Media LLC banner.

We recently sat down with Tony Besasie, president of Cannella Response Television and a member of the Response Advisory Board, to discuss how the combined entity has come together — and more — for this DRMA Spotlight Update.

**Q After last year's rebrand under the Cannella Media umbrella, how are the groups continuing to meld into a coherent business unit?**

**Tony Besasie:** As a strategic initiative toward cross-channel agency offerings, we identified programmatic television as a complementary and growing space that we wanted to get into. AdMore is a front-runner in the space. In addition, we were able to add MPH's sizable short-form cost-per-

acquisition (CPA) performance-based business, REVShare, to our long form CPA business. Furthermore, from an operational perspective both AdMore and REVShare add significant scale and buying capabilities to augment Cannella Response Television's growing short-form division. We now have significantly more breadth to our media scope and can leverage the consolidated operational infrastructure to be more efficient.

When we acquire, we look for great management teams with similar cultures in businesses that allow us to offer services to an expanded client base. We hit these initiatives on all fronts and continue to see the opportunities and efficiencies as we integrate the teams and technology.

**Q What have been the biggest challenges Cannella has faced since the acquisition?**

**Besasie:** They're the ones we expected. As always, it comes down to prioritizing opportunities. When you get smart, passionate, driven teams together, a lot can happen. The challenge is identifying and prioritizing all of those great ideas. Additionally, combining IT systems and standardizing data are always big

projects. Beyond the obvious technical challenges, many people within the organization need to participate in the process. Everyone from media services to human resources is involved. We even need to engage outside service providers and our clients and customers in some data collaboration. All of us are interconnected through data points, and alignment takes time due to the number of people involved.

**Q Have you expanded what you offer to current and new clients? What areas of the business is the company looking to move into?**

**Besasie:** Yes, we cross-promote our services where it fulfills a need for our customers. Long before the acquisition, we were offering our long-form clients both agency media services and CPA-based media. Then, when we launched our short-form division, we were able to provide long-form and short-form media planning and buying services. Now, with acquisition of MPH we can also offer our clients CPA short-form to complement their paid spend, and — for the right client — we can offer rated CPM media. What we didn't expect are the inquiries for more information about DRTV from brand marketers that we first engaged through our programmatic platform. Today, nearly every brand marketer has some 1:1 engagement and DR elements within their digital business, and we're starting to see more of these marketers showing interest in scaling their direct-to-consumer efforts. TV is still the best resource for efficient scale.

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Tony Besasie

We continue to look for new opportunities to expand our business. We're believers in direct response video of any length, in any format, and on any platform. We're also very comfortable with performance-based media where we have some skin in the game. It keeps our entire organization focused on results and efficiency, which are great qualities to have if you're running a media business.

**Q What have been the two biggest accomplishments or changes for Cannella Media in the past year?**

**Besasie:** We're celebrating our one-year anniversary of the acquisition of AdMore, REVShare, and LGT and that integration has been fairly painless so far — which is an accomplishment in itself. Also, within both organizations, we've made considerable advancement in automating many of our processes, as well as advancing our data mining and analysis. These are more meaningful to us than most organizations because of the sizeable CPA and CPM supply-side media platforms we operate. Automating functions that deliver timely and targeted video content guided by insightful data analysis is beneficial to everyone in the value chain — from the media seller to the advertiser.

**Q What key areas are Cannella Media**

**focusing on between now and the end of 2017?**

**Besasie:** We've been investing heavily in data analysis and reporting, especially in the area of visualization and real-time reporting. We've acquired some pretty cool tools to visualize information, but we want to be thoughtful in our approach. It's easy to turn data into a graphic form, but it might not be helpful so we have to show some restraint. If it doesn't reveal a key takeaway, it's just visual noise.

**Q How is Cannella helping its clients respond to the continued fragmentation of the TV viewing audience and consumers' increasing desires to respond to advertising on their own time and terms?**

**Besasie:** The byproducts we see as a result of media fragmentation are more ad inventory and more efficient targetability — or addressability. We think we are in a good position to capitalize on both with our AdMore and CPA networks. AdMore's primary charter is to efficiently deliver third-party verified audiences at scale on a guaranteed basis. Our CPA networks are poised to monetize the incremental inventory generated from media proliferation.

**Q What do you see as two of the hottest topics facing marketers in the performance-based space?**

**Besasie:** We're going to see some pretty interesting things happening in the world of media attribution as more TV entertainment is delivered via internet protocol (IP) and video-on-demand (VOD) consumption is happening on different devices. The present probabilistic attribution models are improving, but they are all dependent on seeing spikes (signals) associated with a timed viewing event. Imagine if all TV became VOD: the ability to



Founded in 1985 by Frank Cannella, **Cannella Media's** history is built on leveraging innovation to meet the needs of marketers in an increasingly complex media environment. With a customer-oriented team, unwavering focus on media accountability, state-of-the-art technology, and marketing know-how, Cannella companies deliver results for its client customers. Those companies include: Cannella Response Television, the largest long-form DRTV media company in North America; AdMore, the largest programmatic media company in North America; and REVShare, the largest short-form performance-based media company in North America.

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identify a spike and associate it with a media event becomes increasingly difficult. However, as more content is consumed through identifiable devices, and those devices also have an integrated mechanism for viewers to respond, we may see a resurgence of 1:1 deterministic attribution.

The other hot topic is the continuing decomposition of television media offset by the reality that traditional linear television will remain as the largest single platform to efficiently reach audiences. We're already seeing an interesting paradox. Linear (legacy) television is losing ground to digital media, yet the fastest growing sector of advertisers using television is digital native companies that have plateaued using digital media. It's kind of ironic. ■