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April 21, 2008

Placecast: A New Kind of Geotargeting



The whirlwind that is AdTech San Francisco has come and gone and as the dust settles and my notes are organized, a few companies stick out with new ideas. Of the thousands of companies at the show, only a handful were explicitly in the local space, including Where2GetIt, ZVents, Local.com, NearbyNow and Ripple (see [post](#) last week).

[Placecast](#) was one of these companies, which works with large advertisers to help them geotarget ads more effectively. Instead of geotargeting in a traditional sense to reach certain demographics known to be in certain areas, Placecast gets much more granular by targeting down to the node level. Specifically, it combines location with a host of other variables to determine context and places ads accordingly.

So an individual in a hotel lobby can be served an ad based on advertisers that have nearby locations, the fact that they could be traveling, the fact that Mother's Day is coming up, or the fact that they could be attending the AdTech conference two blocks away. Each of these factors have implications for ad targeting.

"Think of the ability for airlines to be able to display targeted promotions to travelers in the Minneapolis airport for tickets to Hawaii this weekend where it's 50 degrees warmer and on sale for \$299," says Placecast CEO Anne Bezancon.

The company does this by going past traditional IP targeting, which has well-known deficiencies. Instead it relies on some other forms of location targeting that are beginning to be used for mobile device location awareness, including Wi-Fi triangulation (see [Skyhook Wireless](#)).

"IP targeting is OK, but it only gets you so far, and half the time, it's wrong," says Bezancon. She adds that users are not followed or tracked based on any other criteria but their location. So really, the place is targeted, not the user. Though this misses out on an additional dimension of targeting (behavioral), Bezancon contends this is important to alleviate any privacy concerns that could threaten reception of the product.

Bezancon sees the biggest opportunities with online verticals that are most tied to location, and most sensitive to targeting based on the factors Placecast can come up with. These include travel, high-end merchandise, arts & entertainment, and hotels (think targeting business travelers).

Placecast has direct publisher relationships on one end, and mostly works with large agencies for national brand or promotional advertising. Bezancon sees the opportunity to also address SMB advertisers with whom this local targeting could resonate — particularly in real estate and autos. But she recognizes the sales channel issue in addressing such a fragmented universe of advertisers.

So like any other company making a run at the SMB ad dollar, this will require partnering with local sales channels such as Yellow Pages, or finding single points of entry such as hotel chains, national real estate agencies, regional auto dealer groups, etc. The company already works with Hyatt hotels and will continue to look for angles into the local market.

"We've started out with large advertisers but are interested in forming relationships to get closer to the small businesses market," says Bezancon, adding that she'll be in full force at Drilling Down on Local to start these conversations. Keep an eye out for Bezancon and her colleagues if you're planning to attend.



Blog: [Local Media Blog](#), [Location Targeting](#)

Posted by: Mike Boland at 10:05 pm -

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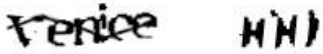
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