

TAB: back in business!

by Joe Philport,
President, Traffic Audit Bureau

Greetings, everyone from the TAB!



Larry Hennessy, VP Audit Policy & Member Services; Jeff Casper, VP, Audit Operations; and Joe Philport, President... your TAB team

It's been a while since the last *TAB Newsbrief* was issued, but it's certainly not for lack of news. 2003 was a formidable year, requiring that both energies and time be focused on what was most important, and clearly that meant advancing the new audit methodology rapidly down the track to completion.

After foraging through what may have been the most challenging year in its history, *TAB* is very much back in business and I am deeply grateful. Without your support, the picture would have been much bleaker. As 2003 opened, *TAB* was facing insolvency and you came to the rescue not just with the cash but with the confidence to allow the organization to regroup and revitalize both inside and out.

And revitalize we did! I'd like to share with you our 2003 results and invite you to participate in our plans for 2004.

2003 Results

A stronger infrastructure

First and foremost, the organization stabilized its financial picture, setting up clear and accountable structures to insure fiscal buoyancy. Needs were assessed, systems reviewed and a new *TAB* organization put into place that focused upon our core mission: to establish, maintain and distribute solid

circulation data about outdoor advertising.

Not only had the new audit methodology radically changed how information was collected and organized, but syndicated research companies such as *Arbitron* and *A.C. Nielsen* had launched outdoor audience initiatives, furthering the need for base circulation data. In essence, *TAB* was required to transition from an organization with manual auditing expertise to a 21st century information and technology provider.

To address this shift, a reorganization was approved by the Board and enacted last October. Several administrative and staff functions were eliminated and a senior team was formed to better align with the needs of our members.

- ▶ **Larry Hennessy** as *VP, Audit Policy & Member Services* leads the measurement of new media, manages the various policies associated with established audits and serves as the primary liaison with our members
- ▶ **Jeff Casper** as *VP, Audit Operations* oversees all management issues associated with *TAB* audits, a task he is well qualified to do given his background in media research and deep knowledge about GPS technologies and mapping systems.

A return to core business

TAB's essential business is its audits and in 2003, we labored relentlessly to evolve the auditing process from the time consuming manual audits of the past to an electronic database driven approach and it truly paid out. At the start of 2003, *TAB* was able to process approximately 35 panels per man/day. By year's end, through the development of our own proprietary software, that figure rose to 800 panels per man/day.

We've really come a long way, baby!

A deeper connection to TAB members

In addition to establishing a foundation of stability, *TAB* looked to its membership to determine short term and long term needs. A "*Best Practices*" study was conducted and a *Leadership Summit* held last August which identified three core needs that both outdoor companies and their clients agreed was critical:



NEWS FROM TAB

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NEWS OF INTEREST TO PLANNERS, BUYERS AND SELLERS OF OUT-OF-HOME ADVERTISING

- ▶ Standardization of industry data
- ▶ Strong and consistent outdoor measurement tools
- ▶ Accountability measures documenting both proof of performance and return on investment (ROI)

As a result of these findings, the Board recommended that an *Information & Technology Steering Committee* be established to insure such goals would be put into practice. Chaired by Rod Rackley from *Circle Graphics*, the new committee met for the first time last November and identified data standards and formats that will improve the accuracy and consistency of audit collection. Once these are designed and developed, all outdoor companies will be speaking the same language, delivering on the promise of making outdoor 'easier to buy'.

Strengthened Partnerships

Clearly, we cannot work in a vacuum and this past year has been exhilarating in the relationships both formed and renewed:

- ▶ A strong association with the OAAA resulted not only in the jointly sponsored *OutdoorRevolution* Conference but vigorous collaboration in and assistance on many new initiatives.
- ▶ AAAA's Out of Home and Media Technology Committees are offering guidance and input as we aim to better integrate TAB's information and technology with common systems and standards being employed throughout the advertising industry.
- ▶ TAB is active again in the ARF with Joe Philport co-chairing the outdoor agenda at ARF's *ESOMAR* worldwide research conference, being held this June in Switzerland.

So what's on map for 2004? More of the same and then some...

2004 Plans

TAB's primary mission remains clear: to establish and supervise practices for the collection and dissemination of outdoor media measurement. As such, TAB's first goal is to complete the transition to fully automated market audits by mid year, while pursuing the following core objectives:

- ▶ New systems to allow on-going updates in plant inventory along with annual revisions of DEC counts
- ▶ A plan to standardize industry data
- ▶ A complete review of all audit policies and procedures to assess current practices as well as determine whom should be given access to TAB data

TAB will also continue to support *Arbitron* and *Nielsen* outdoor initiatives, as well as the development of VAI (Visibility Adjustment indices). In addition, as membership requires, we will explore the audit of alternative media types.

Finally, through the leadership of our Conference Committee, a spring *TAB Conference*, filled with opportunities for learning and sharing among our diverse membership will be staged April 18th – 20th at the *Fairmont* in Scottsdale, Arizona.

This is truly an exciting time to be involved with outdoor media measurement and I am delighted to have this opportunity to serve the industry. Without the faith you expressed in TAB, we could not have come this far. For starters, look for future issues of *TAB Briefs* during 2004 as we intend to issue them twice monthly. But don't wait for your issue... any questions, comments, concerns, I am just a phone call (212-972-8075) or e-mail joephilport@tabonline.com away!