

Partner Spotlight: How Headlight and Roku are helping mobile-first brands lean into streaming TV

New York-based growth marketing agency Headlight has partnered with Roku to test streaming TV campaigns with its mobile-first advertising clients such as Tidal to B2B solutions like Spot On. For the first time, Headlight will use streaming TV to help these clients bridge their performance and brand marketing goals while experimenting with alternative measurement approaches.

Headlight prides itself on unlocking long-term growth for its clients through industry-leading performance marketing, design, and data science. Its work revolves around three pillars: full-funnel performance marketing, a mobile-first performance creative studio, and integrated cross-channel analytics. With nearly 800% revenue growth between 2019 and 2022, Adweek named Headlight the #5 fastest-growing agency worldwide in 2022 and the second-fastest growing digital agency.¹



Steve Massaro
VP of Partnerships, Headlight

We sat down with Steve Massaro, Headlight's VP of partnerships, to discuss its work with Roku and why the agency is bullish on streaming TV.

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“Headlight is very hungry to learn and evolve when it comes to the solutions we’re bringing to our clients,” according to Massaro. “That eagerness to evolve as an agency is why we’ve rolled out CTV pilots with the majority of our clients with Roku.”

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What are Headlight's near-term priorities?

Headlight's priorities are dictated by its clients' unique challenges and opportunities. That includes new limits on data collection under laws such as the California Consumer Privacy Act; platform policies including Apple's App Tracking Transparency framework; and the spectrum of industry proposals to replace third-party cookies.

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“Tackling Data privacy, the evolution of privacy regulations, and the impacts on attribution and cross-platform measurement are probably the most important challenges,” **Massaro said.**

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Headlight is also diving deeper into measurement and attribution, which are in a state of flux. During the pitch process and when upleveling existing accounts, the agency is laser-focused on the accuracy of its reporting and data. It also consults on client tech stacks and builds reporting infrastructure into what clients are already using.

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“There's so much anxiety about what's changing and the accuracy of reporting,” **Massaro said.** *“We're trying to educate clients on the opportunities provided by marketing mix modeling (MMM) and incrementality, and to make sure that when we activate with partners like Roku, we take an incrementality approach while also benefitting from the deterministic data that's available in CTV.”*

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These aggregate and alternative reporting styles also support other focus areas, including media mix diversification and expanding into upper-funnel marketing objectives.

Why did Headlight lean into streaming TV advertising?

Headlight's clients who have historically focused on mobile channels have become much more receptive to CTV, and are eager for guidance as they dip their toes in the streaming waters. Streaming TV advertising combines a customizable and measurable digital presence with access to the largest screen in the house, where it can successfully command the attention that broadcast television once did.

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*“For Headlight, where CTV fits in is that bridge between performance and branding,” **Massaro said.** “We’re getting the audience reach. We’re getting the biddable media. We’re getting that real-time optimization where we can figure out what works and adapt. If we’re missing this one big screen while people are seeing brands in other places, it’s an incomplete story.”*

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By combining upper-funnel objectives with a strong data underpinning, Headlight’s clients can drive meaningful lower-funnel conversions.

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“By layering in CTV, you have a lot more impact. You have different types of video lenses that we can use to educate consumers,” **Massaro said.** “We’ve already seen that trickle down in our pilots and drive great impact on lower-funnel performance and efficiency like purchases or subscriptions. It’s harder to get someone to take an action if they have no familiarity or favorability towards a product because it’s new to them, and this is where CTV plays a key role.”

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For Headlight, CTV provides a bridge between performance and branding.

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Why partner with Roku?

When exploring streaming TV advertising for the first time, Headlight was attracted to Roku’s reputation, reach, and innovation.

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“Roku has that brand name recognition in CTV. It’s like Google with search— synonymous with the big player,”
according to Massaro.

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Headlight can leverage Roku’s relationships with premium content providers and reinforce during pitches that advertisers are in good company, minimizing the brand safety problems that plague other channels.

Furthermore, with Roku, Headlight can test a wide range of innovative ad formats, including pre-, mid-, and post-roll video ads; display ads; and interstitial overlays. Headlight has developed a unique approach to creative optimization, benefiting from each ad formats’ performance advantage, and tailoring each initiative to achieve the brand’s campaign goals.

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“Our creative and growth teams are both bullish on the creative front,” **according to Massaro.** *“For video ads, we’ve seen a 95% completion rate, which is kind of absurd, especially when you think about video completion on other screens.”*

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What marketing challenges are Headlight and Roku working together to solve?

Many mobile-first advertisers have little awareness of streaming TV’s capabilities and how the channel could fit into their media plans. As a result, education is a critical challenge. Before pitching mobile brands on testing streaming TV, Headlight works with Roku to hone its approach, develop assumptions about which strategies will likely work, and create a measurement plan.

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“ Roku gives us great anecdotal and concrete feedback to help guide and articulate what can be accomplished for a specific brand before we even get approval for testing.

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After client campaigns run, Roku supports Headlight with aggregated reporting, insights, and conversion lift studies. “This is extremely important, because it's something that a lot of mobile advertisers haven't been comfortable with when it comes to CTV, and Roku's over-the-top support enables us to keep moving forward.”

What are you most excited about Headlight's plans for this year and beyond?

Steve sees more innovation and growth in Headlight's future. Economic uncertainty forced many brands to focus on efficiency in recent years, which sacrificed innovation and opportunity. “But over the last three months, the conversations we're having with clients and prospects during pitches are very electric and exciting. There's a lot more openness to discuss alternative strategies. They want to be innovative.”

Brands are giving Headlight more autonomy to bring new strategies to life and are taking more risks with creative and channel development. All of that is contributing to an exhilarating phase of growth and development for Headlight.

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“What I'm excited about most is working with partners like Roku who want to take advantage of that momentum,” Massaro said. “They're ready to put the work in to help us with pitches, industry insights, and collateral.”

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Advice for mobile advertisers?

It is still early days for mobile and streaming TV, but Massaro recommends that mobile advertisers carefully choose partners who can educate them on streaming TV.

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“Make sure that you’re working with partners who are helping you understand not just what the next three months ahead are going to look like, but also six months, a year, two years ahead, because privacy regulations and platform policies are going to continue to evolve.”



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Extra: What are you streaming?

Massaro said he watches too much TV. He loved the last season of “Jack Ryan.” HBO Max consumes most of his attention.

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“I was huge on ‘Game of Thrones’ and ‘House of the Dragon.’ Now that those aren’t on, I rewatch both “Mad Men” and “Veep.” He is always streaming something related to food: “I devoured Hulu’s ‘The Bear.’”

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¹ <https://www.prnewswire.com/news-releases/headlight-named-top-digital-agency-on-adweeks-fastest-growing-agencies-2022-list-301661835.html>

Written by:

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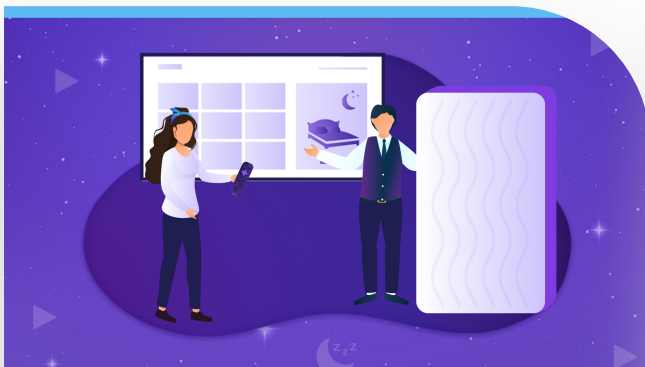
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